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Allen, Ethan, 1738-1789.
Reason the only oracle of
man

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REASON THE ONLY ORACLE OF MAN

by

ETHAN ALLEN

With an Introduction

by

JOHN PELL

SCHOLARS' FACSIMILES & REPRINTS
100 WEST 31st STREET
New York, N. Y.
1940

Facsimile reproduction of a copy in the
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INTRODUCTION

Ethan Allen's name was immortalized by the capture of Fort Ticonderoga in May 1775 "In the Name of the Great Jehovah and the Continental Congress" and by the activities of the Green Mountain Boys. He is generally remembered as an American Robin Hood, a backwoods yokel who led a band of ruffians to capture a peaceful garrison of British regulars who were unacquainted with the fact that a war was being waged (though undeclared) at Boston. Contrary to this impression, Ethan was actually a serious student of philosophy and political economy. The illusion can best be dispelled by his own words:

> "In my youth I was much disposed to contemplation, and at my commencement in manhood I committed to manuscript such sentiments or arguments as appeared most consonant to reason, lest through the debility of memory, my improvement should have been less gradual. This method of scribbling I practised for many years, from which I experienced great advantages in the progression of learning and knowledge, the more so as I was deficient in education and had to acquire the knowledge of grammar and language as well as the art of reasoning, principally from a studious application to it, which after all, I am sensible, lays me under disadvantages, particularly in matters of composition; however, to remedy this defect I have substituted the most unwearied pains."

An aptitude for learning, a taste for cultivation, has often resulted from a youthful friendship with someone old enough and wise enough to be able to discuss serious subjects with knowledge and without didacticism. Ethan had the good fortune to form an early friendship with Thomas Young, an itinerant doctor who had acquired at Yale a smattering of Deism (the intellectual enthusiasm of the moment) along with a smattering of medicine. Meeting Ethan at Salisbury, Connecticut, Young was attracted by his intellectual curiosity and often invited him to his house where the two spent long evenings together, the kind of evenings made up of blazing fires, comfortable chairs (comfortable for the time, at any rate), long drinks, and conversation,—evenings that form the pleasantest memories of youth.

Much of Young's erudition had been acquired second-hand, as it were, through the writings of Charles Blount, an early champion of Deism who devoted a good part of his really staggering fund of erudition to such intellectual feats as asking where Eve found thread to stitch her fig leaves, and how the serpent learned to talk. It is a matter of some significance that the title of one of his books was: *Oracles of Reason.* Another of Young's favorite authors was Humphrey Ditton, a mathematician who today is about as well known as Charles Blount. Besides these authors and their works, Young was familiar with and probably possessed copies of Locke's *Essay on Civil Government*, Warburton's *Divine Legation of Moses,* Watts' *Sermons* and Salmon's *Geographical Grammar.* Ethan thus acquired a certain familiarity with the classics and with such moderns as Locke, Hobbes, and Machiavelli, second-hand through his conversations with Young, if not third-hand through talking with Young, who, in turn, was quoting Blount's references to Plutarch or Tacitus. It is little wonder that Ethan's scholarship was a trifle distorted; however, his enthusiasm was magnificent, and, as he described the situation, "after many painful searches and researches after the truth" he resolved "at all events to abide the decision of rational argument in the premises"— which you can accept for what it is worth.

In the manner of itinerant doctors (particularly those who in the eighteenth century experimented with innoculation) Young moved to other parts before long, taking with him the notes and outline for a book on theology which he and Ethan had worked up together; apparently, they promised each other to get together sometime and finish the job.

Like so many promises made in youth, this one was never fulfilled, but Ethan's interest in philosophy, stimulated by his youthful intimacy with Thomas Young, never entirely died out. Years later, in the midst of a complicated intrigue with the British in Canada, (a negotiation which saved Vermont from invasion during the latter years of the Revolution), Ethan wrote that he was "heartily weary of war" and wished "once more to enjoy the sweets of peace and devote himself to his philosophical studies".

Not long after that, he went to Philadelphia to plead for Vermont's admission to the Union; there, learning that Thomas Young had died, he obtained from the family the manuscript which the two men had compiled together in Salisbury. He brought the manuscript back in his saddlebags to his house in Sunderland and, for the next year or so, devoted a considerable amount of time to converting the rough manuscript into a book.

Besides Young's notes he assembled in his "office" a working library which included a Bible, Pope's *Essay on Man*, Salmon's *Geographical Grammar*, Rathburn's *Account of the Shaker Sect*, and two dictionaries, Daniel Fenning's and Dr. Johnson's. There is a story, still current in the country around Sunderland, that Ethan engaged a young college student to act as his amanuensis. Ethan, it is said, dictated while walking up and down the room, swinging his cane. The young man would occasionally interrupt to suggest that a word was misplaced or the sense not clear, whereupon Ethan would lose his temper and threaten the poor youth with his cane until he put down what Ethan wanted.

When the manuscript was completed, Ethan packed it into his saddlebags and rode to Hartford, Connecticut, to suggest to the printers, Watson and Goodwin, that they publish the book. They had published several of Ethan's political pamphlets, defying the Government of New York willingly enough, but when it came to defying the Congregational Church, they politely declined.

About this time the State of Vermont helped two young men named Haswell and Russell to set up a press in Bennington and, after some negotiations. they agreed to print fifteen hundred copies of

Ethan's book, to be paid for as the work progressed. That was one of the worst bargains Ethan ever made, for in order to raise the money he finally had to sell his house to his brother Ira. He moved to Timothy Follett's boarding house in Bennington where he could keep close watch on the printing and proof-reading. His financial difficulties were not over, however, and that winter he wrote to James Caldwell, an Albany merchant:

> "My system of philosophy is nearly half printed and the printers have proposed to me, to take goods for their pay; I therefore take the liberty of proposing a trade with you, to the amount of one hundred and fifty pounds lawful money, on terms of six, or eight months credit, in which time I presume the Books will turn to money, to make remittance to you for the goods; besides I have considerable money due to me within that time. You will please to consider my proposition and act in the premises as may be consistent with your schemes of Trade."

Apparently, Mr. Caldwell could not see the value of literature as collateral, for in the spring Ethan rode to Philadelphia and commuted the pay which was due him from the Continental service. When he returned to Bennington he laid cash (Continentals were still worth something) on the table and, at last, the book went to press. He presented the first copy to Fanny, his second wife, inscribing on the title page these lines:

> "Dear Fanny wise, the beautiful and young,
> The partner of my joys, my dearest self,
> My love, pride of my life, your sexes pride,

> And partner of Sincere politeness,
> To thee a welcome compliment I make
> Of treasures rich, the Oracles of Reason."

Ethan sent copies to all of his friends, and actually sold some copies, although not always receiving payment in cash. A group of people in Goshen appointed Ephraim Starr to write to Ethan to find out if he would send them a few copies in return for goods from Ephraim's store, as they had no cash. The book came to be known as "Ethan Allen's Bible" and, if not producing handsome financial returns for its author, it did stir up a good deal of controversy. People wrote letters to the local papers under such noms de plume as "Ethan Nomatterwho, Philanthropos", and Lemuel Hopkins, a Hartford doctor, inserted an advertisement in the "Vermont Gazette" reading:

> "Just imported in the Balloon Sarcastic (Imported from France) and now opening for sale . . . by the Genius of Vermont at her store on the top of Mount Anthony in Bennington, a large assortment of valuable books, among which are the following . . . Deism Confessed and Good Manners Defended, with a chapter in favor of Oracles and a section on the heat of good blood near the grand clymacterice, and the animation of youthful charms. By E.A."

The clergy answered Ethan from their pulpits as well as with pamphlets, and one humorist, pretending to be Lord George Gordon, wrote a long letter to the "Gazette" thanking Ethan for offering to dedicate the book to him, but suggesting that the honor should be conferred on the Grand Mogul, so that Ethan's philosophy might be incorporated into the Mohammedan faith.

Undaunted by the lack of financial success which his literary efforts had produced, Ethan compiled a sequel, (newly reprinted in the present volume[1]) which he referred to in several letters as the "Appendix to the Oracles of Reason". To one friend he wrote: "Should you procure 18 or 20 pound by subscription in ready money it shall be published next spring." But the ready money was not forthcoming, and Ethan did not publish the "Appendix". He wrote a note to his wife Fanny asking her to have the manuscript published "whenever it can without infringing upon my present or future living," and left the manuscript in her possession.

The "Appendix" was not published until 1873. The manuscript had by then come into the possession of the Hon. George F. Houghton of St. Albans, Vermont, who offered it to the Editors of the *Historical Magazine* on condition that they publish it and appropriate from the anticipated profits arising from the publication, a sum to be used for the erection of a monument to Ethan Allen.

The editors accepted the proposal, but, before the serial publication of the "Appendix" was commenced, Mr. Houghton died and, presumably, the statue idea died with him. No statue of Ethan was ever built out of profits from his literary undertakings, but the two books remain as a monument to this extraordinary man's versatility; if neither occupies an important place in the annals of American literature, they do deserve more than passing interest for the insight which they give into the intellectual preoccupations of the frontier at the outset of the American Republic. After a century of material progress, it is not inappropriate to recall that long ago, in the Vermont hills, men faced with war and poverty found time to consider the nature of creation and the essence of the soul.

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[1] In the reprint of the "Appendix" included in the present volume, no attempt is made to correct the typographical errors in the original printing in the *Historical Magazine*, which is described as an accurate reproduction of Ethan's manuscript, faults and all.

JOHN PELL

New York
March, 1940

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Copies of the 1784 edition of the ORACLE are distributed as follows, as far as is known to us. In compiling this list the Editor had the kind assistance of Mr. John Clement of Rutland, Vt.

American Antiquarian Society
Boston Athenaeum
British Museum
Boston Public Library
Henry E. Huntington Library
John Carter Brown Library
Library of Congress
New York Public Library
New York State Library
University of Vermont
Wilbur Library, University of Vermont
Vermont State Library, 2 copies, one presentation to Allen's wife
J. H. Frenier, Rutland, Vt.
Matt B. Jones, Newton Centre, Mass.
Harold G. Rugg, Hanover, N. H.
Hall Park McCullough
John Spargo
Charles E. Tuttle Co., Rutland, Vt.
The Rosenbach Company
The Stephen H. P. Pell Collection, Fort Ticonderoga Museum (2 copies)

An abridgement of the REASON was published with the following title: *Reason the Only Oracle of Man; or a Compendious System of Natural Religion*, by Colonel Ethan Allen. Published by G. W. and A. I. Matsell. New York; Wm. Sinclair, Philadelphia. 1836. 12 mo. pp. 106, including table of contents (index).

A second edition of the abridgement was issued in Boston, 1854. J. P. Mendum, Cornhill. 2 p. l., 171 pp.

The Introduction attached to the abridgement contains the following remarks:

"The first edition of this work was printed by Mr. Haswell of Bennington, Vermont. Not long after its publication, a part of the editorial, comprising the entire of several signatures, was accidentally consumed by fire: whether Mr. Haswell deemed this fire a judgment upon him for having printed the work or not, is unknown—but, the fact is, he soon after committed the remainder of the edition to the flames, and joined the Methodist Connection, so that but few copies were circulated."

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REASON THE ONLY ORACLE OF MAN

(1784)

REASON

THE ONLY

ORACLE OF MAN.

REASON THE ONLY ORACLE OF MAN,

OR A

Compenduous Syſtem OF *Natural* RELIGION.

Alternately ADORNED with Confutations
of a variety of DOCTRINES
incompatible to it;
Deduced from the moſt exalted Ideas which
we are able to form of the
DIVINE and Human
CHARACTERS,
AND FROM THE
Univerſe in General.

By Ethan Allen, *Eſq*;

BENNINGTON:
STATE OF VERMONT;
Printed by HASWELL & RUSSELL.
M,DCC,LXXXIV.

PREFACE.

AN apology appears to me to be impertinent in writers who venture their works to public inſpection, for this obvious reaſon, that if they need it, they ſhould have been ſtifled in the birth, and not permitted a public exiſtence. I therefore offer my compoſition to the candid judgment of the impartial world without it, taking it for granted that I have as good a natural right to expoſe myſelf to public cenſure, by endeavouring to ſubſerve mankind, as any of the ſpecies, who have publiſhed their productions ſince the creation. and I aſk no favour at the hands of philoſophers, divines or Critics, but hope and expect they will ſeverely chaſtiſe me for my errors and miſtakes, leaſt they may have a ſhare in perverting the truth, which is very far from my intention.

IN my youth I was much diſpoſed to contemplation, and at my commencement in manhood, I committed to manuſcript ſuch ſentiments or arguments, as appeared moſt conſonant to reaſon, leaſt through the debility of memory my improvement ſhould have been leſs gradual: This method of ſcribling I practiſed for many years, from which I experienced great advantages *in the progreſſion of learning and knowledge, the more ſo as I was deficient in education, and had to acquire the knowledge of grammar and language, as well as the art of reaſoning, principally from a ſtudious application to it, which after all I am ſenſible, lays me under diſadvantages, particularly in matters of compoſition: however, to remedy this defect, I have ſubſtituted the moſt unwearied pains, and frankly acknowledge, that I have been ſo mortified by my own corrections of the ſubſequent treatiſe, that I am in ſome meaſure diffident of my accompliſhments in compoſing it, but confident nevertheleſs, that I have ſtruck the outlines of a conſiſtent ſyſtem, which I recommend to abler writers to perfect.*

THE Bible and a Dictionary have been the only books, which I have made uſe of, ſince I have been correcting my old manuſcripts, and making the following compoſition; though in thoſe manuſcripts I had copied ſundry paſſages from certain authors, many years prior to the completion of the ſubſequent diſcourſe, which the reader will find tranſcribed with proper quotations.

I HAVE invariably endeavored to make reaſon my guide through the whole contents of the ſyſtem, and expect that they who read it, will approve or diſapprove it, as they may judge, whether it accords with that original principle or not.

IF The arguments are rightly ſtated, and the inferences juſtly drawn, they will ſtand the teſt of truth, although they do not come recommended to the public with the prelude of "Thus ſaith the Lord."

PREFACE

IN the circle of my acquaintance (which has not been ſmall) I have generally been denominated a Deiſt, the reality of which I never diſputed, being conſcious I am no Chriſtian, except mere infant baptiſm makes me one; and as to being a Deiſt, I know not ſtrictly ſpeaking, whether I am one or not, for I have never read their writings; mine will therefore determine the matter; for I have not in the leaſt diſguiſed my ſentiments, but have written freely without any conſcious knowledge of prejudice for, or againſt any man, ſectary or party whatever; but wiſh that good ſenſe, truth and virtue may be promoted and flouriſh in the world, to the detection of deluſion, ſuperſtition and falſe religion: and therefore any errors in the ſucceeding treatiſe, which may be rationally pointed out, will readily be reſcinded,

By the public's moſt obedient humble ſervant,

Ethan Allen.

VERMONT, *July* 2, 1782.

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SECTION I.

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THE deſire of knowledge has engaged the attention of the wiſe and curious among mankind in all ages, which has been productive of extending the arts and ſciences far and wide in the ſeveral quarters of the globe, and excited the contemplative to explore nature's laws in a gradual ſeries of improvement, 'till philoſophy, aſtronomy, geography and hiſtory, with many other branches of ſcience, have arrived to a great degree of perfection.

It is nevertheleſs to be regreted, that the bulk of mankind, even in thoſe nations which are moſt celebrated for learning and wiſdom, are ſtill carried down the torrent of ſuperſtition, and entertain very unworthy apprehenſions of the BEING, PERFECTIONS, CREATION and PROVIDENCE of GOD, and their duty to him, which lays an indiſpenſible obligation on the philoſophic friends of human nature, unanimouſly to exert themſelves in every lawful, wiſe and prudent method, to endeavour to reclaim mankind from their ignorance and deluſion, by enlighening their minds in thoſe great and ſublime truths concerning God and his providence, and their obligations to moral rectitude, which in this world, and that which is to come, cannot fail greatly to affect their happineſs and well being.

Though "*None by ſearching can find out God, or the Almighty to perfection*;" yet I am perſuaded, that if mankind would dare to exerciſe their reaſon as freely on thoſe divine topics, as they do in the common concerns of life, they would, in a great meaſure rid themſelves of their blindneſs and ſuperſtition, gain more exalted ideas of God and their obligations to him and one another, and be proportionably delighted and bleſſed with the views of his moral government, make better members of ſociety, and acquire many powerful incentives to the practice of morality, which is the laſt and greateſt perfection that human nature is capable of.

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OF *the* BEING *of a* GOD.

THE Laws of Nature having ſubjected mankind to a ſtate of abſolute dependence on ſomething out of, and manifeſtly beyond themſelves, or the compound exertion of their natural powers, gave them the firſt conception of a ſuperior principle exiſting; otherwiſe they could have had no poſſible conception of a ſuperintending power. But this ſenſe of dependency, which reſults from experience and reaſoning on the facts, which every day cannot fail to produce, has uniformly eſtabliſhed the knowledge of our dependence to every of the ſpecies who are rational, which neceſſarily involves or contains in it the idea of a ruling power, or that there is a GOD, which ideas are ſynonimous.

THIS is the firſt glimpſe of a Deity, and powerfully attracts the rational mind to make farther diſcoveries, which, through the weakneſs of human reaſonings opens a door for errors and miſtakes reſpecting the divine eſſence, though there is no poſſibility of our being deceived in our firſt conceptions of a ſuperintending power. Of which more will be obſerved in its order.

THE globe with its productions, the planets in their motions, and the ſtarry heavens in their magnitudes, ſurprize our ſenſes, and confound our reaſon, in their munificent leſſons of inſtruction concerning GOD, by means whereof we are apt to be more or leſs loſt in our ideas of the object of divine adoration, though at the ſame time every one is truly ſenſible that their being and preſervation is from GOD. We are too apt to confound our ideas of GOD with his works, and take the latter for the former. Thus barbarous and unlearned nations have imagined, that inaſmuch as the ſun in its influence is beneficial to them in bringing forward the ſpring of the year, cauſing the production of vegetation, and food for their ſubſiſtence, that therefore it is their GOD: while others have located other parts of creation, and aſcribe to them the prerogatives of God; and mere creatures and images have been ſubſtituted to be Gods by the wickedneſs or weakneſs of man, or both together. It ſeems that mankind in moſt ages and parts of the world have been fond of corporeal Deities with whom their outward ſenſes might be gratified, or as fantaſtically diverted from the juſt apprehenſion of the true God, by a ſuppoſed ſupernatural intercourſe with inviſible and mere ſpiritual beings, to whom they aſcribe divinity, ſo that through one means or other, the character of the true God has been much neglected, to the great detriment of truth, juſtice and morality in the world; nor is it poſſible, that mankind can be uniform in their religious opinions, or worſhip God according to knowledge, except they can form a conſiſtent arrangment of ideas of the Divine character. This therefore ſhall be the great object of the following pages, to which all others are only ſubordinate; for the ſuperſtructure of our religion will be proportionate to the notions we entertain of the divinity whom we adore. A ſenſibilily of mere dependence includes an idea of ſomething, on which we depend (call it by what name we will) which has a real exiſtence, in as much as a dependency on nonentity is inadmiſſibe, for that the abſence or non-exiſtence of all being could not have cauſed an exiſtence to be. But ſhould we attempt to trace the ſucceſſion of the cauſes of our dependence, they would exceed our comprehenſion, though every of them, which we could underſtand, would be ſo many evidences (of the diſplays) of a God. Although a ſenſe of dependency diſcloſes to our minds the certainty of a Supreme Being, yet it does not point out to us the object, nature or perfections of that being; this belongs to the province of reaſon, and in our courſe of ratiocination on the ſucceſſion of cauſes and events. Although we extend our ideas retroſpectively ever ſo far upon the ſucceſſion, yet no one cauſe in the extended order of ſucceſſion, which depends upon another prior to itſelf, can be the independent cauſe of all things: nor is it poſſible to trace the order of the ſucceſſion of cauſes back to that ſelf-exiſtent cauſe, inaſmuch as it is eternal and infinite, and therefore cannot be traced out by ſucceſſion, which operates according to the order of time, conſequently can bear no more proportion to the eternity of God, than time itſelf may be ſuppoſed to do, which has no proportion at all; as the ſucceeding arguments reſpecting the eternity and infinity of God will evince. But notwithſtanding the ſeries of the ſucceſſion of cauſes cannot be followed in a retroſpective ſucceſſion up to the ſelf-exiſtent or eternal cauſe, it is nevertheleſs

leſs a perpetual and concluſive evidence of a God. For a ſucceſſion of cauſes, conſidered collectively, can be nothing more than effects of the independent cauſe, and as much dependent on it, as thoſe dependent cauſes are upon one another; ſo that we may with certainty conclude that the ſyſtem of nature, which we call by the name of natural cauſes, is as much dependent on a ſelf-exiſtent cauſe, as an individual of the ſpecies in the order of generation is dependent on its progenitors for exiſtence. Such part of the ſeries of nature's operations, which we underſtand, has a regular and neceſſary connection with, and dependence on its parts, which we denominate by the names of cauſe and effect. From hence we are authoriſed from reaſon to conclude, that the vaſt ſyſtem of cauſes and effects are thus neceſſarily connected, (ſpeaking of the natural world only) and the whole regularly and neceſſarily dependent on a ſelf exiſtent cauſe; ſo that we are obliged to admit an independent cauſe, and aſcribe ſelf-exiſtence to it, otherwiſe it could not be independent, and conſequently not a God. But the eternity or manner of the exiſtence of a ſelf-exiſtent and independent being is to all finite capacities utterly incomprehenſible; yet this is ſo far from an objection againſt the reality of ſuch a being, that it is eſſentially neceſſary to ſupport the evidence of it; for if we could comprehend that being, whom we call God, he would not be God, but muſt have been finite, and that in the ſame degree as thoſe may be ſuppoſed to be, who could comprehend him; therefore ſo certain as God is, we cannot comprehend his eſſence, eternity or manner of exiſtence. This ſhould always be premiſed, when we aſſay to reaſon on the being, perfection, eternity and infinity of God, or of his creation and providence. As far as we underſtand nature, we are become acquainted with the character of God; for the knowledge of nature is the revelation of God. If we form in our imagination a compeduous idea of the harmony of the univerſe, it is the ſame as calling God by the name of harmony, for there could be no harmony without regulation, and no regulation without a regulator, which is expreſſive of the idea of a God. Nor could it be poſſible, that there could be order or diſorder, except we admit of ſuch a thing as creation, and creation contains in it the idea of a creator, which is another appellation for the Divine Being, diſtinguiſhing God from his creation. Furthermore there could be no proportion, figure or motion without wiſdom and power; wiſdom to plan, and power to execute, and theſe are perfections, when applied to the works of nature, which ſignify the agency or ſuperintendency of God. If we conſider nature to be matter, figure and motion, we include the idea of God in that of motion; for motion implies a mover, as much as creation does a creator. If from the compoſition, texture, and tendency of the univerſe in general, we form a complex idea of general good reſulting therefrom to mankind, we implicitly admit a God by the name of good, including the idea of his providence to man. And from hence ariſes our obligation to love and adore God, becauſe he provides for, and is benificent to us: abſtract the idea of goodneſs from the character of God, and it would cancel all our obligations to him, and excite us to hate and deteſt him as a tyrant; hence is is, that ignorant people are ſuperſtitiouſly miſled into a conceit that they hate God, when at the ſame time it is only the idol of their own imagination, which they truly ought to hate and be aſhamed of; but were ſuch perſons to connect the ideas of power, wiſdom, goodneſs and all poſſible perfection in the character of God, their hatred toward him would be turned into love and adoration.

For mankind to hate truth as it may bring their evil deeds to light and puniſhment, is very eaſy and common; but to hate truth as truth, or God as God, which is the ſame as to hate goodneſs for its own ſake, unconnected with any other conſequences, is impoſſible even to a (premiſed) diabolical nature itſelf. If we advert to the ſeries of the cauſes of our being and preſervation in the world, we ſhall commence a retroſpective examination from ſon to father, grand-father and great-grandfather, and ſo on to the ſupreme and ſelf-exiſtent father of all: and as to the means of our preſervation or ſucceeding cauſes of it, we may begin with parental kindneſs in nouriſhing, ſuccouring and providing for us in our helpleſs age, always remembering it to have originated from our eternal father, who implanted that powerful and ſympathetic paternal affection in them.

By extending our ideas in a larger circle, we ſhall perceive our dependence on the earth and waters of the globe, which we inhabit, and from which we are bountifully fed and gorgeouſly arrayed, and nextly extend our ideas to the ſun, whoſe fiery maſs darts its brilliant rays of light to our terraqueous ball with amazing velocity, and whoſe region of inexhauſtible fire ſupplies it with fervent heat, which cauſes vegetation and guilds the various ſeaſons of the year with ten thouſand charms: this is not the atchievement of man, but the workmanſhip and providence of God. But how the ſun is ſupplied with materials thus to perpetuate its kind influences, we know not. But will any one deny the reality of thoſe beneficial influences, becauſe we do not underſtand the manner of the perpetuality of that fiery world, or how it became ſuch a body of fire; or will any one deny the reality of nutrition by food, becauſe we do not underſtand the ſecret operation of the digeſting powers of animal nature, or the minute particulars of its cheriſhing influence, none will be ſo ſtupid as to do it. Equally abſurd would it be for us to deny the providence of God, by "whom we live, move, and have our being," becauſe we cannot comprehend it.

We know that earth, water, fire and air in their various compoſitions ſubſerve us, and we alſo know that theſe elements are devoid of reflection, reaſon or deſign; from whence we may eaſily infer, that a wiſe, underſtanding, and deſigning being has ordained them to be thus ſubſervient. Could blind chance conſtitute order and decorum, and conſequently a providence? That wiſdom, order, and deſign ſhould be the production of non-entity, or of chaos, confuſion and old night, is too abſurd to deſerve a ſerious confutation, for it ſuppoſeth that there may be effects without a cauſe, viz. produced by non-entity, or that chaos and confuſion could produce the effects of power, wiſdom and goodneſs; ſuch abſurdities as theſe we muſt aſſent to, or ſubſcribe to the doctrine of a ſelf-exiſtent and providential being. Chaos itſelf would neceſſarily include the idea of a creator, inaſmuch as it ſuppoſes a poſitive exiſtence, though it precludes the idea of a Providence, which cannot exiſt without order, tendency and deſign.

But Chaos could no more exiſt independent of a Creator than the preſent aptly diſpoſed ſyſtem of nature. For there could be no fortuitious jumble, or chaos of original atoms, independent of or previous to creation, as nonentity could not produce the materials. *Nothing from nothing and there remains nothing, but ſomething from nothing is contradictory and impoſſible* The evidence of the being and providence of a God, is ſo full and compleat, that we cannot miſs of diſcerning it, if we but open our eyes and reflect on the viſible creation. The diſplay of God's providence is that by which the evidence of his being is evinced to us, for though mere Chaos would evince the certainty of a Creator, yet that abſtracted method of argument could not have been conceived of, or known by us, was it not for the exerciſe of God's Providence, (by whom we have our being ;) though that argument in itſelf would have been true whether it had been uſed by us or not : for the reaſon of propoſitions and juſt inferrences in themſelves, are in truth the ſame, independent of our conceptions of them, abſtractedly conſidered from our exiſtence.

The benefit accruing to us from reaſoning and argument, as it reſpects our knowledge and practice, is to explore the truth of things, as they are in their own nature, this is our wiſdom. All other conceptions of things are falſe and imaginary. We cannot exerciſe a thought on any thing whatever, that has a poſitive exiſtence, but if we trace it thoroughly it will center in an independent cauſe, and be evidential of a God. Thus it is from the works of nature that we explore its great author; but all inquiſitive minds are loſt in their ſearches and reſearches into the immenſity of the divine fulneſs, from whence our beings and all our bleſſings flow.

SECTION III.

The manner of diſcovering the Moral Perfections and natural Attributes of GOD.

HAVING in a conciſe manner offered a variety of indiſputable reaſons to evince the certainty of the being and providence of God, and of his goodneſs to man through the intervention of the ſeries of nature's operations, which are commonly deſcribed by the name of natural cauſes. We come now more particularly to the conſideration of his moral perfections, and though all finite beings fall as much ſhort of an adequate knowledge thereof, as they do of perfection itſelf; nevertheleſs through the intelligence of our own ſouls we may have ſomething of a proſpective idea of the divine perfections. For though the human mind bears no proportion to the divine, yet there is undoubtedly a reſemblance between them; for inſtance, God knows all things, and we know ſome things, and in the things which we do underſtand, our knowledge agrees with that of the divine, and cannot fail of neceſſarily correſponding with it. To more than know a thing, ſpeaking of that thing only, is impoſſible even to omniſcience itſelf; for knowledge is but the ſame in both the infinite and finite minds: To know a thing is the ſame as to have right ideas of it, or ideas according to truth, and truth is uniform in all rational minds, the divine mind not excepted. It will not be diſputed but that mankind in plain and common matters underſtand juſtice from injuſtice, truth from falſhood, right from wrong, virtue from vice, and praiſe worthineſs from blame-worthineſs, for otherwiſe they could not be accountable creatures. This being admitted, we are capable of forming a complex idea of a moral character, which when done in the moſt deliberate, the wiſeſt and moſt rational manner in our power, we are certain bears a reſemblance to the divine perfections. For as we learn from the works of nature an idea of the power and wiſdom of God, ſo from our own rational nature we learn an idea of his moral perfections.

But mere power and wiſdom abſtractedly conſidered from juſtice, goodneſs and truth, are not neceſſarily connected with a moral character, as applicable to man, as many tyrants have demonſtrated, who have been wiſe to plan and powerful to execute unjuſt wars to the ruin and deſtruction of their ſpecies: but on the other hand when power and wiſdom are in the poſſeſſion of patriots they ſubſerve mankind. But as God is unchangeably and infinitely juſt and good, as well as infinitely wiſe and powerful, he can therefore never vary from the rectitude of his moral character, and conſequently his power and wiſdom, though not included in his moral perfections (being his natural attributes) cannot act in oppoſition to his moral character. For of all poſſible ſyſtems infinite wiſdom muſt have eternally diſcerned the beſt, and infinite juſtice, goodneſs and truth approved it, and infinite power effected it*.

From what has been obſerved on the moral perfections of God, we infer that all rational beings, who have an idea of juſtice, goodneſs and truth, have at the ſame time either a greater or leſs idea of the moral perfections of God. It is by reaſon that we are able to compound an idea of a moral character, whether applied to God or man;

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* This concluſion is meant to reſpect the creation and providence of God only, and not to affect the liberty of man, or to infringe the morality of his actions.

it is that which gives us the ſupremacy over the irrational part of the creation, and it is that by which we may truly be ſaid to be "made after the image of God."

SECTION IV.

Of the ETERNITY and INFINITY of GOD.

WE proceed next to enquire into the eternity and infinity of God. To aſk how God came to be, implies a contradiction to his being as God in as much as it ſuppoſes him to have come from, and to be dependent on ſome pre-exiſting cauſe, which holds up to our view the character of a finite and dependent being. But if we extend our minds retroſpectively on the chain of pre-exiſting cauſes as far as human numeration can extend, ſtill we are at as great a remove from a God as when we firſt attempted the order of pre-exiſting cauſes; for a mere ſucceſſion of cauſes cannot extend themſelves *ad infinitum*. If we conceive of God to have exiſted from eternity and that he will exiſt to eternity; in this conception we form an idea that God exiſted in time, and that in time he will ceaſe to be, *viz*; from a certain Æra called eternity he exiſted to a ſecond Æra called by the ſame name, *viz*; from one Epocha to another: and on this poſition there would have been an eternity preceding his exiſtence, and another ſucceeding it, as it is often expreſſed from the deſk "from eternity to eternity thou art God," which is diametrically inconſiſtent with a juſt idea of eternity. God did not come to be, but was, nor did he exiſt from eternity, but eternally exiſted, and will eternally exiſt. Though eternity includes an idea of exiſtence or duration (as applied to God) without beginning or end, yet it is neceſſary, in diſcuſſing the ſubject of eternal exiſtence, to divide it into the preceeding and ſucceeding eternity, as they may be conſidered ſeperately by the mind; but to conſider it complexly, it is but one entire eternity without beginning or end. The idea of exiſtence without beginning or end, contains in it an idea of ſelf exiſtence and independence of any pre-exiſting cauſe: but an exiſtence from eternity, neceſſarily implies either from a certain time, or from a certain pre-exiſting cauſe, called by the name of eternity, which runs into the abſurdity of the derivation of a God from the chain of ſuppoſed pre-exiſting cauſes, which has been already ſufficiently confuted.

Self-existence is the higheſt appellation we can aſcribe to God, for nothing ſhort of that can render him independent, and eſtabliſh a juſt ſenſe of his divinity and eternity. And though we cannot comprehend this miſterious manner of exiſtence, yet we can comprehend that any manner of exiſtence, ſhort of, or inferior to that which is ſelf-exiſtent, muſt neceſſarily be dependent, conſequently imperfect and utterly devoid of any rightful pretenſions of a God: for that which is not ſelf-exiſtent, muſt neceſſarily be dependent on that which is ſo, or it could not exiſt, except we ſuppoſe that a dependent exiſtence can exiſt independently, which is inadmiſſible. It is not good ſenſe, when we are ſpeaking of God, to ſay that he is the firſt cauſe of all things; for if it was true, there would have been ſecond, third, fourth and fifth cauſes in the ſeries, and ſo on to the cauſes now in immediate exerciſe or influence, which would neceſſarily imply a beginning to the ſucceſſion, and conſequently to the being of God. But ſucceſſion, which can operate no other way but according to the order of time or numerical calculations of the ſucceſſions of cauſes, cannot eternally extend itſelf.

For inſtance, we will premiſe a mathematical eternal or endleſs line, which would be endleſs both ways, and every part of it would be equally in the middle, or more properly ſpeaking there would be no middle or centre to it, in as much as it is ſuppoſed to be endleſs. So that was a cannon ball to be diſcharged on either direction of ſuch a ſuppoſed line at any given time, and ſuppoſe it to continue its velocity (which is the ſame as ſucceſſion of motion) with unabated rapidity forever, it would never reach the endleſs extenſion of that line; for that which is without beginning or end is eternal, and cannot be meaſured or comprehended by the ſucceſſion of numbers or motion, or by any thing that is capable of a calculation from the order of time: for which reaſon it is in nature impoſſible to trace the ſeries of natural cauſes up to the ſelf-exiſtent and eternal cauſe. Though it is in nature poſſible to trace a ſucceſſion of cauſes up to a ſuppoſed firſt cauſe; for firſt, ſecond and third and ſo on throughout numeration belong to numbers and are in their nature capable of being explored by a ſucceſſion, multiplication or diviſion of numbers, which would be a contradiction to the eternity of God, therefore God cannot in truth be ſaid to be the firſt cauſe of all things. For if by the ſucceſſion of cauſes we could trace out the being of God, there would have been an eternity preceding his exiſtence; inaſmuch as all poſſible calculations on the ſucceſſion of cauſes would only conſtitute a limitted duration of time, and fall as much ſhort of the eternity of God, as our calculations of time may be ſuppoſed to do. But although God cannot with propriety be ſaid to be the firſt cauſe, yet he is the efficient cauſe of all things, viz. a cauſe uncauſed and eternally ſelf-exiſtent, gave being and order to nature, co-eval with his own exiſtence, and creation regulated (which is the ſame as nature) being eternal, is the reaſon why we cannot trace the footſteps of the creator by a ſucceſſion of cauſes up to the eternal cauſe (for that the ſeries is alſo eternal) any more than we can trace an endleſs line by the motion of a cannon ball before alluded to. For exiſtence without a beginning, a line without end, or an eternal ſeries of natural cauſes (which on the poſition of the eternity of nature muſt be admitted) are each and every of them beyond our calculations of ſucceſſion, motion or progreſſion, which are predicated on the fleeting moments of time.

To ſuppoſe that an eternal ſeries of natural cauſes begins with a firſt cauſe, is the ſame as ſuppoſing a beginning to the exiſtence of God, and conſequently that the ſeries is not eternal, but that there was a previous eternity, which is a downright contradiction to the eternity of God. According to the rules of chronology, a firſt always implies a particular æra; thus Moſes repreſents God to be under ſix thouſand years old at preſent, his words are theſe, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." This Epocha is calculated from the Jewiſh chronology, which wants but few figures to comprize. The Chineſe aſcribe an æra of about forty thouſand years exiſtence to their God; but theſe are only different beginnings and do neither of them explain the eternal, ſelf-exiſtent cauſe: It may be ſaid that Moſes ſpake only with reſpect to the creation of the "Heavens and the earth;" be it ſo, yet if in any part of ſpace there had been any previous diſplay of creation, that which Moſes was ſpeaking of could not have been the beginning.

Yet it may be objected, that God might have been eternal, though creation might have had a beginning; but this would include the ſame ſort of abſurdity as to ſuppoſe a king without any ſubjects: becauſe that previous to creation there could be nothing to govern or provide for, and conſequently there could not have been any diſplay of Providence, which is eſſential to the being of a God. Therefore creation and providence or nature, are as eternal as God. So that with reſpect to God and his works of nature there could be no firſt or laſt, for they are eternal: as will be fully evinced in the ſucceeding chapter.

We proceed next to enquire into the infinity of God. And firſt; we will premiſe, that there is no medium between infinite and finite as applied to God, or to his works of nature (which are the ſame as his creation and providence) or as applied to mere ſpace. (God diſplays his providence in the ſeries of nature's operations.) Infinity is boundleſs and unlimited, but finitude is circumſcribed and limitted, between which there is no compariſon or proportion. A ſuppoſed infinite nature or ſpace would be as unlimitted all poſſible ways as that of an eternal line may be ſuppoſed to be two ways, and every part of its immenſity would be void of a centre.

Circumference neceſſarily admits of a centre, and though ever ſo extenſive, comes within the deſcription of finitude; but immenſity having no circumference is alſo without a centre, ſo that the rapid motion of a cannon ball forever, could not extend itſelf through immenſity, for that which is boundleſs, cannot be explored and comprehended by the ſucceſſion of motion, or any progreſſive operation, or by the addition of numerical parts though they ſhould be ſuppoſed to be ever ſo large and numerous: inaſmuch as every of them is ſuppoſed to be local, they would therefore make but a local whole; and finally bear no proportion to infinite nature (which comprehends all things) or to infinite ſpace: ſo with reſpect to an infinite mind, it is not included in any place, or excluded from any place, but fills immenſity with cogitation, and perfectly underſtands all things, and is poſſeſt of all poſſible powers, perfections and excellencies without addition or dimunition.

THIS is a ſummary of the infinity of God, conſiſting of wiſdom, power, juſtice, goodneſs and truth, with their eternally connected and almighty operations, co-extenſive with the immenſe fullneſs of things.

SECTION V.

The Cauſe of IDOLATRY *and the Remedy of it.*

INASMUCH as God is not corpoeral, and conſequently does not and cannot come within the notice of our bodily ſenſations; we are therefore obliged to deduce inferences from his providence, and particularly from our own rational nature, in order to form our conceptions of the divine character, which through inattention, want of learning, or through the natural imbecility of mankind, or through the artifice of deſigning men, or all together, they have been greatly divided and ſubdivided in their notions of a God. Many have ſo groped in the dark, as wholly to miſtake the proper object of divine worſhip, and not diſtinguiſhing the creator from his creation, have paid adoration to "four footed beaſts and creeping things." And ſome have aſcribed divine honors to the ſun, moon, or ſtars; while others have been infatuated to worſhip dumb, ſenſeleſs and unintelligent idols, which derived their exiſtence as Gods, partly from mechanics, who gave them their figure, proportion and beauty, and partly from their prieſts, who gave them their attributes; whoſe believers, it appears, were ſo wrought upon, that they cried out in the extacy of their deluded zeal "Great is Diana." Whatever deluſions have taken place in the world relative to the object of divine worſhip, or reſpecting the indecencies or immoralities of the reſpective ſuperſtitions themſelves, or by what means ſoever introduced or perpetuated, whether by deſigning men whoſe intereſt it has always been to impoſe on the weakneſs of the great maſs of the vulgar; or as it is probable, that part of thoſe deluſions took place in conſequence of the weakneſs of uncultivated reaſon, in deducing a viſible inſtead of an inviſible God from the works of nature. Be that as it will, mankind are generally poſſeſſed of an idea, that there is a God; however they may have been miſtaken or miſled as to the object. This notion of a God, as has been before obſerved, muſt have originated from a univerſal ſenſe of dependence, which mankind have on ſomething that is more wiſe, powerful and beneficent than themſelves, or they could have had no apprehenſions of any ſuperintending principle in the univerſe, and conſequently would never have ſought after a God, or have had any conception of his exiſtence, nor could deſigning men have impoſed on their credulity by obtruding falſe Gods upon them: but taking advantage of the common belief that there is a God, they artfully deceive their adherents with regard to the object to be adored. There are other ſorts of idols which have no exiſtence but in the mere imagination of the human mind; and theſe are vaſtly the moſt numerous, and univerſally (either in a greater or leſs degree) interſperſed over the world; the wiſeſt of mankind are not and cannot be wholly exempt from them, inaſmuch as every wrong conception of God is (as far as the error takes place in the mind) idolatrous. To give a ſample, an idea of a jealous God is of this ſort. Jealouſy is the offspring of finite minds, proceeding from the want of knowledge, which in dubious matters makes us ſuſpicious and diſtruſtful; but in matters which we clearly underſtand there can be no jealouſy, for knowledge excludes it, ſo that to aſcribe it to God is a manifeſt infringement of his omniſcience.*

The idea of a revengeful God is likewiſe one of that ſort, but this idea of divinity being borrowed from a ſavage nature, needs no further confutation: The repreſentation of a God, who, (as we

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"* The Lord thy God is a JEALOUS GOD."

we are told by certain divines) from all eternity, elected an inconſiderable part of mankind to eternal life, and reprobated the reſt to eternal damnation, merely from his own ſovereignty, adds another to the number, this repreſentation of the Deity undoubtedly took its riſe from that which we diſcover in great, powerful and wicked tyrants among men, however tradition may ſince have contributed to its ſupport, though I am apprehenſive, that a belief in thoſe who adhere to that doctrine, that they themſelves conſtitute that bleſſed elect number, has been a greater inducement to them to cloſe with it, than all other motives added together. It is a ſelfiſh and inferior notion of a God void of juſtice, goodneſs and truth, and has a natural tendency to impede the cauſe of true religion and morality in the world, and diametrically repugnant to the truth of the divine character, and which, if admitted to be true, overturns all religion, wholly precluding the agency of mankind in either their ſalvation or damnation, reſolving the whole into the ſovereign diſpoſal of a tyrannical and unjuſt being, which is offenſive to reaſon and common ſenſe, and ſubverſive of moral rectitude in general. But as it was not my deſign ſo much to confute the multiplicity of falſe repreſentations of a God, as to repreſent juſt and conſiſtent ideas of the true God, I ſhall therefore omit any further obſervations on them in this place with this remark, that all unjuſt repreſentations, or ideas of God, are ſo many detractions from his character among mankind. To remedy theſe idolatrous notions of a God, it is requiſite to form right and conſiſtent ideas in their ſtead.

THE diſcovery of truth neceſſarily excludes error from the mind, which nothing elſe can poſſibly do; for ſome ſort of God or other will crowd itſelf into the conceptions of dependent creatures, and if they are not ſo happy as to form juſt ones, they will ſubſtitute erroneous and deluſive ones in their ſtead; ſo that it ſerves no valuable purpoſe to mankind, to confute their idolatrous opinions concerning God, without communicating to them juſt notions concerning the true one, for if this is not effected, nothing is done to purpoſe. For, as has been before obſerved, mankind will form to themſelves, or receive from others, an idea of Divinity either right or wrong: this is the univerſal voice of intelligent nature, from whence a weighty and concluſive argument may be drawn of the reality of a God, however inconſiſtent moſt of their conceptions of him may be. The fact is, mankind readily perceive that there is a God, by feeling their dependence on him, and as they explore his works, and obſerve his providence, which is too ſublime for finite capacities to underſtand but in part, they have been more or leſs confounded in their diſcoveries of a juſt idea of a God, and of his moral government. Therefore we ſhould exerciſe great application and care, whenever we aſſay to ſpeculate upon the Divine character, accompanied with a ſincere deſire after truth, and not aſcribe any thing to his perfections or government, which is inconſiſtent with reaſon or the beſt information which we are able to apprehend of moral rectitude, and be at leaſt wiſe enough not to charge God with injuſtice and contradictions, which we ſhould ſcorn to be charged with ourſelves. No king, governor or parent would like to be accuſed with partiality in their reſpective governments, "*Is it fit to ſay unto Princes, ye are ungodly, how much leſs to him that regardeth not the perſons of princes, or the rich more than the poor, for they are all the work of his hands.*"

Chapter II.

SECTION I.

OF *the* ETERNITY *of* CREATION.

AS Creation was the reſult of eternal and infinite wiſdom, juſtice, goodneſs and truth, and effected by infinite power, it is like its great author miſterious to us. How it could be accompliſhed, or in what manner performed, can never be comprehended by any capacity, but that by whoſe almighty fiat it was executed. Yet from the neceſſary attributes, perfections, eternity and infinity of God, we may demonſtrate that creation muſt alſo have been eternal and infinite. Had it not been eternal there could not have been an eternal diſplay of thoſe divine attributes and perfections, which neceſſarily conſtitute a God.

To ſuppoſe God to have been ſelf-exiſtent and eternal, but inactive till ſome certain æra or period of time, when he may have been ſaid to have commenced the work of creation, would imply a contradiction to his nature as GOD : as on this theſis there would have been an eternity previous to the æra of the creation, for time or duration without beginning, to any certain epocha, is equally eternal, as time from ſuch epocha without end ; the one repects the preceding and the other the ſucceeding eternity ; conſequently if creation was commenced in time, the eternity preceding it muſt be ſuppoſed to be poſſeſſed by an inactive being, if by any at all. But if GOD be admitted to have been eternal, he may as well be ſuppoſed to have been eternally active, or in other words eternal exertion would have been inſeperably connected with his exiſtence as God, and if eternally active, why not as well eternally create ? viz. co-eval with the preceding eternity. As there could be but one ſimple and uncompounded exertion in the act of creation, and immenſity being perfectly replete with it, the exertion need not and could not be repeated. Though providence, which is the exertion or operation of nature, is continued in an eternal ſeries, eternal creation is no more than eternal exertion or action, the one is as myſterious as the other, and diſputing againſt them is neither more nor leſs than diſputing againſt the eternity of

God. Eternal whether applied to duration, exiſtence, action or creation, is incomprehenſible to us, but implies no contradiction in either of them; for that which is above our comprehenſion we cannot perceive to be contradictory, nor on the other hand can we perceive its rationallity or conſiſtency, We are certain that God is a rational, wiſe, underſtanding Being, becauſe he has in degree made us ſo, and his wiſdom, power and goodneſs is viſible to us in his creation and government of the world: From theſe facts we are rationally induced to acknowledge him, and not becauſe we can comprehend his being, perfections, creation or providence: could we comprehend God he would ceaſe to be what he is. The ignorant among men cannot comprehend the underſtanding of the wiſe among their own ſpecies, much leſs the perfection of a God. Nevertheleſs, in our raciocination upon the works and harmony of nature, we are obliged to concede to a ſelf-exiſtent and eternal cauſe of all things, as has been ſufficiently argued, though at the ſame time it is miſterious to us, that there ſhould be ſuch a being as a ſelf-exiſtent and eternally independent one. Thus we believe in God, although we cannot comprehend any thing of the how, why, or wherefore it was poſſible for him to be; and as creation was the exertion of ſuch an incomprehenſible and perfect being, it muſt of neceſſary conſequence be, in a great meaſure, miſterious to us; we can nevertheleſs be certain, that it has been of an equal eternity and infinitude of extenſion with God.

None will diſpute the reality of creation, inaſmuch as none can go amiſs of the evidence of the certainty of it. This being premiſed, it neceſſarily follows that it was either eternal, or in time, as there can be no third way or mean between theſe two; for that which is not eternal muſt have had a beginging, which is the ſame as an exiſtence in time.

With reſpect to us, we cannot effect or do any thing but in time; we have a dependent exiſtence, and after a ſeries of ſucceeding parts of time we arrive to a capacity of manhood, and every action of our lives is performed in the order of time: and as one part of time ſucceeds another, ſo our actions ſucceed each other, and every of our individual actions are progreſſive in themſelves, ſimply conſidered, and are meaſured by time, whoſe fleeting moments paſs ſwiftly on towards their never ending ſtage, eternity. But when we ſpeak of the act, exertion or creation of God, we ſhould conceive of them, as not being confined or limitted to the order of time, or ſucceſſively connected with its fleeting moments like ours; for ſuch conceptions circumſcribe and limit the power of God, and are ideally ſubverſive of his eternity, infinity and abſolute perfection, ſubjecting him to a capacity or condition, which is manifeſtly finite. But creation is nothing ſhort of an infinite exertion of God, who being eternally omnipreſent, the operation or exertion of the act of creation was eternally every where; as omniſcient it was perfectly conſiſtent and beſt; as omnipotent it was perfected without ſucceſſion of time; and being eternally and infinitely compleat, the almighty act of creation could never be repeated.

Immensity being replete with creation, the omniſcient, omnipreſent, omnipotent, eternal and infinite exertion of God in creation, is incomprehenſible to the underſtanding or the weakneſs of man, and will eternally remain the prerogative of infinite penetration, ſagacity and uncreated intelligence to underſtand.

SECTION II.

The Natural Impossibility *of a* Successive Creation *evinces the* ETERNITY *of it.*

NEVERTHELESS, for arguments ſake, and further to illuſtrate the doctrine of eternal creation, we will examine into the merits of any ſuppoſed ſucceſſive creation, and firſt, it will not be diſputed but that time is compounded of parts, viz. a ſucceſſion of years, months, days, minutes, and ſeconds of duration. That time cannot extend its ſucceſſion or retroſpection co-eval with eternity, hath been already fully evinced; ſo that it neceſſarily follows, that whatever is done in time, or according to the order of time cannot be eternal, or infinite, as it may reſpect the preceding or ſucceeding eternity: and conſequently ſuch things or acts which are done in thoſe confined and limitted parts of duration are the exertions and productions of finite beings: ſo that if in our raciocination on creation, we evince that in the very nature of things it could not have been perfected according to the order of time, then the doctrine of eternal creation will of neceſſary conſequence be eſtabliſhed.

Thus having ſtated and opened the argument, we proceed to enquire into the merits of it. Provided the act of creation had been continued ever ſo many days, months or years in a ſucceſſive or progreſſive manner, it would ſtill be a bounded work; for the addition of ever ſo many local parts, could make but a local whole, which is as certain as that two and two make four, and is that which is called a mathematical certainty, ſo that immenſity could not have been repleted by a ſucceſſive creation, had it been continued from any given time, forever, and that with the greateſt progreſſive velocity. The motion of a cannon ball to be continued with the utmoſt rapidity from this time forever, would be as inadequate to meaſure immenſity, as the motion of a ſnail may be ſuppoſed to be. For infinitude cannot be compounded of parts, or meaſured by time, nor repleted by any thing which pertains to, or operates by ſucceſſion; for it hath no bounds, terms or limits, but is boundleſs and endleſs, ſwallows up our calculations of time with all its productions, and drowns the utmoſt ſtretch of all finite thoughts and compariſons.

FROM the foregoing arguments the inference neceſſarily follows, that as creation has a real exiſtence, and could not have been perfected in time, it is therefore eternal.

SECTION III.

The ETERNITY *and* INFINITY *of* GOD, *demonſtrative of the* ETERNITY *and* INFINITY *of his* CREATION *and* PROVIDENCE.

THE eternity and infinity of God neceſſarily imply the eternity and infinity of creation and providence. That an infinite being ſhould be local in his government, or diſplay of his providence, is a downright contradiction both to the infinity of his power and goodneſs, the ſame as a ſuppoſed creation in time would be to his eternity. The complex idea of a God contains in it an idea of his providence, as much as the complex idea of a king includes that of ſubjects, or the idea of parents that of an offspring: to ſuppoſe a king without ſubjects, parents without iſſue, or a God without a providence, is equally chimerical, and to ſuppoſe a providence previous to creation, is as romantic a ſuppoſition as either of the former; for on this poſition there could have been no exiſtencies or creatures to govern or provide for, and conſequently there could have been no diſplay of wiſdom, power and goodneſs (which is the ſame as a providence) previous to creation, which would preclude an eternal providence, and conſequently the eternal exiſtence of a God. For nothing can be more evident than that the eternal diſplay of thoſe divine perfections, is abſolutely eſſential to the being of a God, as it makes him to be what he is, viz. an eternally active, providential, and good being. Therefore, as certain as God is eternal and infinite, creation is ſo likewiſe.

It may be objected that God was eternally happy in himſelf, and needed none of the ſervices of his creatures, and therefore paſſed the previous eternity in the fruition of thoſe attributes, which, in the ſucceeding eternity, he ſaw fit to exerciſe; but it ſhould be conſidered, that if there had been a ſufficient reaſon in the divine mind not to have diſplayed his perfections or providence in the preceding eternity, if God had acted conſiſtently, then he would have made no diſplay of them in the ſucceeding eternity: for if there may be a ſuppoſed reaſon for inactivity in God, in the previous eternity, it muſt have held good as applied to the latter, inaſmuch as eternal and infinite reaſon muſt have been eternally the ſame. Among men it is ſaid that contrivance is half, but an infinite mind, which can receive no enlargement by thinking or by experiments, and whoſe perfections are eternally the ſame, cannot fail of eternally acting uniformly from the ſame reaſons: and as a ſuppoſed creation in time muſt have had the divine approbation, and the reaſon as well as the power to have effected it muſt have been eternal with God, it conſequently could not have failed to have eternally produced the ſame effect, viz. eternal creation and providence.

FURTHERMORE, if creation and providence, although they may be ſuppoſed to have commenced in time, yet if complexly conſidered, they contain or imply any real perfection or excellence, then it neceſſarily follows, that previous to the æra of creation, God was imperfect; for if there be any diſplay of perfection in a ſuppoſed creation and providence in time, God muſt be ſuppoſed to have been deficient of it in the preceding eternity, and as a deficiency or want of perfection in God would be a downright contradiction to his being, and equally ſo in the previous as in the ſubſequent eternity, we therefore infer that creation and providence muſt have been eternal. Finally, if we admit that creation had a beginning, there was a beginning to the moral government and diſplay of the divine perfections, which muſt have been exerted co-eval with God, and from hence it follows that there was alſo a beginning to the being and exiſtence of God, which would render him dependent on ſome pre-exiſtent cauſe, and be ſubverſive of his eternity, ſelf-exiſtency and independency; as has been before argued. We are therefore obliged to admit the eternity of creation and providence, which is the ſame as eternal exertion or action; and as the act was not and could not be progreſſive, or according to the order of time, but as one ſimple or uncompounded exertion of eternal and immenſe perfection, repleted the boundleſs work, it opened an eternal and infinitely ample field for the diſplay of divine providence.

SECTION

SECTION IV.

Of the INFINITUDE *and* ETERNITY *of* PROVIDENCE *in the* CREATION *and* FORMATION *of* FINITE BEINGS.

THAT the ſucceſſion of time, according to our calculations of it, is not eternal, has been fully evinced, whether applied to creation, formation, or providence, or to any thing elſe, provided it be ſuppoſed to have a beginning, which is always ſuppoſed, when we ſpeak of time or its diviſion. But by premiſing a ſelf-exiſtent and conſequently an eternal cauſe, we may then ſuppoſe an eternal ſucceſſion of cauſes, which in nature to us would be incomprehenſible, and conſequently incapable of being numerated by us; inaſmuch as the efficient and ſelf-exiſtent cauſe is eternal and the creation and regulation of things without the beginning of numbers or period of exiſtence, or viciſſitude: and thus the ſucceſſion would be without beginning or end, which is as eternal as an infinite line may be ſuppoſed to be; and may be denominated an eternal ſeries, as they are the harmonious revolutions of nature in which the providence of God conſiſts, and in which it may be truly ſaid to be eternal, and we may as well ſuppoſe an eternal formation, as an eternal creation or action

tion, for if we but admit the eternity and infinity of God, that of the eternity and infinity of his creation and providence (which may as well include formation) follows of conſequence, as there could be no providence or government before there were creatures to govern or provide for; ſo that we are obliged to admit, that creatures were either eternally created, or eternally formed, or both, which doctrine may be objected to from this conſideration, that creation and dependent creatures on ſuch a poſition, would, as to their eternity, be co-eval with God, how then could they be dependent on him? I anſwer as well as the act of God, which may be eternal and yet dependent on the being or eſſence of God, or as there may be eternal emanations eternally flowing from an eternal cauſe. The eternal exiſtence or ſucceſſion of finite beings in the preceding eternity, is as reconcilable to the attributes, perfections and providence of God, as that they ſhould be immortal or capable of a ſubſequent eternal duration, which we believe with reſpect to the ſouls of mankind.

THIS doctrine of eternal creation and providence, as alſo the infinitude of it, may give offence to ſuch perſons who may read this book, and who have habituated themſelves to trace their genealogy from Adam as the firſt rational finite being.

They may be ſurpriſed at an apprehenſion of an eternal infinitude of creation, finite beings and providence. But this muſt eternally have been the caſe as before argued; ſo that we ſhould conceive that as God was eternal, and eternally active, he might, and has eternally created and formed intelligent accountable agents; nor is the eternal creation or eternal formation, and conſequently the eternal exiſtence or ſucceſſion of finite beings, as they may reſpect the antecedent eternity, at all more contradictory or impoſſible with God than the immortality of the human ſoul, or the eternal perpetuation or ſucceſſion of finite beings, as they may reſpect the ſubſequent eternity. Inaſmuch as ſelf-exiſtent, eternal and infinite perfection is eternally the ſame, and may and muſt have been equally exerted eternally: alluding to one entire eternity without beginning or end.

Though we cannot comprehend the ſelf-exiſtency eternity and infinity of God, or the eternity and infinitude of his creation and providence, yet we can comprehend, that a being that is not ſelf-exiſtent, is neceſſarily dependent upon a being that is by nature ſelf-exiſtent and ſelf-ſufficient, or it could not have exiſted, for that a dependent being cannot exiſt independently, any more than it could exiſt and not exiſt at the ſame time.

Therefore the ſelf-ſufficiency, independency and ſelf-exiſtency of the efficient cauſe of all things, is demonſtrable from the dependent intelligent beings, and the things of nature now exiſting and with which our external ſenſes, internal reflections and underſtandings are converſant; and from the ſelf-ſufficiency and exiſtency of the efficient cauſe of all things we infer, that that cauſe has all poſſible power, or in other words, that it is omnipotent, or it could not have ſelf-ſufficiently exiſted and given being to the univerſality of things, and having thus eſtabliſhed the omnipotency of the efficient cauſe of all things, we infer its eternity and infinity, for that a being of all power, ſelf-ſufficiency, exiſtency or omnipotency, could not have exiſted in time, or at any certain æra; inaſmuch as it would be a contradiction to his ſelf-ſufficiency or omnipotency, that he had not exiſted before ſuch æra or any other period of time; for a ſelf-exiſtent and omnipotent being could not have waited on the will, pleaſure or power of any other being or cauſe for his exiſtence, and all ſufficiency, and therefore muſt have ſelf-ſufficiently, omnipotently, and eternally exiſted, for otherwiſe he could not be ſelf-ſufficient, all-ſufficient or omnipotent, ſince the power of exiſtence is eſſential to omnipotency, for without the exiſtence of it there could be no ſuch power in the univerſe, and as an exiſtent omnipotent power includes all power, it neceſſarily, among others includes the power of an eternal exiſtence, for any power, ſhort of an eternal one, could not be truly and abſolutely omnipotent, as it would be deficient in the article of its eternity; therefore omnipotent power is eternal.

The eternal creation and providence of God is the neceſſary reſult of his eternal exiſtence and activity. If God has been eternally exiſtent and active he has done ſomething, for he could not have been active in doing nothing; and if ſomething, we quere whether it is not ſomething worthy of a God. To aſcribe trifles to him is unworthy of him, to ſuppoſe, for inſtance, that he worked by the day, or reſted from labour, or carried on the work of creation according to our notions of the ſucceſſion of time, or progreſſively, are ſuggeſtions inadequate to an infinite being, or to anſwer the deſign of perfecting an immenſe creation, and extending or diſplaying an unlimitted providence, which could never have been perfected by a progreſſive or finite exertion, had it been continued *ad infinitum.* But on the contrary, let us but premiſe that God is eternal and infinite, and the conſequence muſt unavoidably follow that his creation and providence are likewiſe eternal and infinite, which neceſſarily implies the eternal creation, formation and exiſtence, or ſucceſſion of finite intelligent beings: For a creation and regulation of things (which we call nature) abſtractly conſidered from intelligences,,could not have conſtituted a providence, as there could have been,on ſuch a poſition, no diſplay of the divine goodneſs or character,in the creation and government of mere incogitative and ſtupid matter, incapable of ſenſation, reflection, or enjoyment; for ſuch a creation & harmony of mere natural things could not have diſplayed any apprehenſion of the being, attributes and perfections of a God, whoſe divinity could no otherwiſe have been diſcerned but by the exerciſe of reaſon. Therefore intelligent finite beings muſt have been interſperſed co-eternal and co-extenſive with the being, creation and providence of God; and diſputing againſt the eternal exiſtence or ſucceſſion of finite intelligencies, or againſt the eternity and infinity of creation and providence,is neither more or leſs in the final conſequences of it, than diſputing againſt the reality of a God. For as certain as there is a God, he is eternally and infinitely perfect, and if ſo, his creation and providence is alſo eternally and infinitely perfect and compleat, whatever our ignorant apprehenſions and reaſonings on this divine ſubject may be:

THERE may perhaps ariſe ſome queries in the mind of the reader, relative to the ſeveral parts of the arguments in this treatiſe, concerning ſucceſſion in the exertion of God in creation, wherein it is argued that a ſucceſſive creation had it been continued forever, could not have extended the amplitude of it beyond a limitted or local one, and yet in this and other ſections of this work, it is argued that there muſt have been an eternal ſucceſſion or ſeries in the productions and viciſſitudes of natural things and particularly in finite intelligent beings, as they may reſpect the antecedent and ſubſequent eternity.

THESE arguments at firſt ſight appear to claſh. That there ſhould have been an eternal ſucceſſion in the order of nature, and yet that we cannot by our ſucceſſive admeaſurements comprehend the immenſity of things, ſeems to be contradictory, but it ſhould be conſidered that the ſucceſſions of nature are eternal and therefore without beginning or end, but that our calculations are finite, as they have a beginning and end, and therefore cannot comprehend the eternal ſucceſſion of things, or the eternity of God, or the infinitude of his creation or providence. It has been already argued that by tracing the order of the ſucceſſion of cauſes retroſpectively, we cannot arrive at the eternal or ſelf-exiſtent cauſe, for that the ſucceſſion is eternal, and therefore exceeds our numerical calculations, which are governed by the addition of units or regulated by the order of time. Though from the preſent order of nature we argue its eternal ſucceſſion and viciſſitude, which exceeds our numeration, becauſe there is no firſt in the ſeries, as they are infinite and eternal, the ſame as a premiſed endleſs (extended) chain, in which there could be no firſt link, ſo in an eternal or infinite ſucceſſion, there could not be a firſt in the ſucceſſion, as it would be a contradiction to infinite extenſion, or to an eternal duration of the exiſtence of God.

Those things which have a beginning and end we can trace by our calculations to their reſpective æras, but are loſt in our attempts to compute an eternal duration or exiſtence, or an infinite extenſion or creation, for that which is endleſs or boundleſs exceeds all our mathematics, and ſwallows up all our thoughts and compariſons. To preambulate a premiſed mathematical eternal line, or an infinite circle, or to calculate an eternal ſeries or ſucceſſion of cauſes, or the mere eternal exiſtence of a God, or of duration, are to us equally impoſſible, nevertheleſs we are as certain of an eternal duration, as we are of the eternal exiſtence of God, for if God has been eternal, the duration of his exiſtence muſt have been alſo eternal, whether we are able to calculate it or not, and the ſame may be truly affirmed of an eternal creation, or of an eternal providence, or of the eternal exiſtence and ſucceſſion or generation of intelligent finite beings. An eternal ſeries or ſucceſſion in nature is as reconcileable to our underſtandings, as the eternal exiſtence of nature, or the eternal exiſtence of a God, ſo that we may as well diſpute againſt any mere eternal exiſtence whatever, as againſt an eternal ſucceſſion. For if one may be the other is poſſible, whether we can comprehend them or not. The manner of theſe infinite calculations are to us incomprehenſible, but not contradictory; for we cannot underſtand that to be a contradiction, which to us is incomprehenſible.

FINALLY, as there could be no God without a providence, and no providence without intelligent beings on whom only it could be exerciſed, therefore, inaſmuch as there is a God, finite intelligences have been interſperſed through the creation and providence of God co-eval with his exiſtence. But as to a premiſed ſucceſſive creation, or a progreſſive one conſiſting of local parts, which collectively conſidered, could make but a local whole, it could not be of the creation and providence of God, for this very reaſon, that by our mathematical calculations we could comprize it, and therefore it could be but finite, which would be infinitely inadequate for the territorial providence of an abſolutely perfect and infinite being.

SECTION V.

The Diſtinction between Creation and Formation.

IT is proper to make a conciſe diſtinction between creation and formation, to prevent any confuſion in our minds, in applying the one to the other. Formation belongs to that, which we call the eternal ſeries of cauſes and effects, which we have been frequently deſcribing as ſurpaſſing our calculations by numbers, and though it is eternal, it is in the eternal order of nature dependent on creation, and creation as eternally dependent on the eternal ſelf-exiſtent cauſe. Creation affords the materials of formation or modification, and that power of nature called production, gives birth to the vaſt variety of them; but production could not be from nothing; formation and modification are therefore the production of creation. Creation, as has been before obſerved, having been eternal and without ſucceſſion, could not be repeated ed, inaſmuch as there was an eternal and immenſe fulneſs; yet acts of natural production by formation, may and have been carried on in an eternal ſeries, as the productions of vegetable and animal life, may exhibit a ſample; in fine productions (which are the ſame as growths) in general are nothing elſe but formation. Nor is death, decay and diſſolution any thing elſe but a diſſolution of forms, and not annihilation or a diſſolution of creation, which is infinitely *complete* and independent of any particular form; though it muſt exiſt in ſome form or other, and is neceſſarily united with all poſſible forms: and thus it is, that all forms in general are indebted to creation for their exiſtence. And the immenſe creation, conſiſting of elements, poſſeſſes its various forms and is endowed with all neceſſary properties, qualities, diſpoſitions and aptitudes that we denominate by the term *nature*, which muſt have been *co-eval* with the eternity of God, and muſt neceſſarily remain to all duration *co-extenſive* and *co-exiſtent* with the divine nature.

SECTION VI.

Obſervations on Moſes's Account of Creation.

THE foregoing theory of creation and providence will probably be rejected by moſt people in this country, inaſmuch as they are prepoſſeſſed with the theology of Moſes, which repreſents creation to have had a beginning, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." In the preceeding part of this chapter it has been evinced that creation and providence could not have had a beginning, and that they are not circumſcribed but unlimited; yet it ſeems, that Moſes limited creation by a proſpective view of the heavens, or firmament, from this globe, and if creation was thus limitted, it would conſequently have circumſcribed the dominion and diſplay of the divine providence or perfection; but if Moſes's idea of the creation of "the heavens and the earth," was immenſe, ever ſo many days of progreſſive work could never have finiſhed ſuch a boundleſs creation; for a progreſſive creation is the ſame as a limitted one; as each progreſſive days work would be bounded by a ſucceſſive admeaſurement, and the whole ſix days work added together, could be but local and bear no manner of proportion to infinitude, but would limit the dominion and conſequently the diſplay of the divine perfections or providence, which is incompatible with a juſt idea of the eternity and infinity of God, as has been argued in the foregoing pages.

IT may be objected, that immenſity, all around the terraqueous ball to the verge of Moſes's "heavens and earth," had been eternally replete with creation, providence and goodneſs, but that the part of ſpace comprized in his repreſentation of the "heavens and the earth" was, till the æra of its beginning (which according to the chronology of the Jews, was, till leſs than ſix thouſand years ago) an empty chaſm in the creation, and conſequently in the providence of God, which ſo far would be ſubverſive of a juſt conception of his infinity. Inaſmuch as on this poſition, creation and providence muſt have been incomplete till the epocha of the ſuppoſed creation of the "heavens and the earth," at which time it may be ſuppoſed to have been compleated, and which ſuppoſes an addition to the creation, and conſequently to the providence of God. But had they been previouſly infinitely extended, they could not have admitted an enlargement. For immenſity, as it may reſpect creation, providence, or mere ſpace, is incapable of progreſſion or addition, inaſmuch as immenſity forecloſes it. From hence we infer, that as certain as the creation and providence of God was eternally and infinitely complete, Moſes's ſtory of the creation of the "heaven's and the earth," is inadmiſſible, as it militates againſt the perfection of God; for as the work of creation is, ſo is its author, whether perfect or imperfect, local or infinite.

THERE are a variety of other blunders in Moſes's deſcription of creation, one of which I ſhall mention, which is to be found in his hiſtory of the firſt and fourth days work of God: "*And God ſaid let there be light and there was light, and God called the light day and the darkneſs he called night, and the evening and the morning was the firſt day.*" Then he proceeds to the ſecond and third day's work and ſo on to the ſixth; but in his chronicle of the fourth days work, he ſays that "*God made two great lights, the greater light to rule the day, and the leſſer light to rule the night.*" This appears to be an inconſiſtent hiſtory of the original of light; day and night were ordained the firſt day, and on the fourth day the greater and leſs lights were made to ſerve the ſame purpoſes; but it is likely that many errors have crept into his writings, through the viciſſitudes of learning, and particularly from the corruptions of tranſlations, of his as well as the writings of other ancient authors, beſides, it muſt be acknowledged, that thoſe ancient writers laboured under great difficulties in writing to poſterity, merely from the conſideration of the infant ſtate of learning and knowledge, then in the world, and conſequently we ſhould not act the part of ſevere critics with their writings, any further than to prevent their obtruſion on the world as being infallible.

SECTION VII.

OF *the* ETERNITY *and* INFINITUDE *of* DIVINE PROVIDENCE.

WHEN we conſider our ſolar ſyſtem, attracted by its fiery centre, and moving in its ſeveral orbits with regular, majeſtic and periodical revolutions; we are charmed at the proſpect and contemplation of thoſe worlds of motion, and adore the wiſdom and the power by which they are attracted, and their velocity regulated and perpetuated. And when we reflect that the bleſſings of life are derived from and dependent on the properties, qualities, conſtructions, proportions and movements of that ſtupendous machine, we gratefully acknowledge the divine beneficence. When we extend our thoughts (through our external ſenſations) to the vaſt regions of the ſtarry heavens, we are loſt in the immenſity of God's works; ſome ſtars appear fair and luminous and others ſcarcely diſcernable to the eye, which by the help of glaſſes make a brilliant appearance, bringing the knowledge of others far remote within the verge of our feeble diſcoveries, which merely by the eye could not have been diſcerned or diſtinguiſhed. Theſe diſcoveries of the works of God, naturally prompt the inquiſitive mind to conclude that the author of this aſtoniſhing part of creation, which is diſplayed to our view, has ſtill extended his creation; ſo that if it were poſſible that any of us could be tranſported to the fartheſt extended ſtar, which is perceptible to us here, we ſhould from thence ſurvey worlds as diſtant from that as that is from this, and ſo on *ad infinitum*.

FURTHERMORE, it is altogether reaſonable to conclude, that the heavenly bodies, *alias* worlds, which move or are ſituate within the circle of our knowledge, as well as all others throughout immenſity, are each and every of them poſſeſſed or inhabited by ſome intelligent agents or other, however different their ſenſations or manner of receiving or communicating their ideas may be from our's, or however different from each other. For why would it not have been as wiſe or as conſiſtent with the perfections which we adore in God, to have neglected giving being to intelligences in this world as in thoſe other worlds, interſperſed with æther of various qualities in his immenſe creation? And inaſmuch as this world is thus repleniſhed, we may with the higheſt rational certainty infer, that as God has given us to rejoice, and adore him for our being, he has acted conſiſtent with his goodneſs, in the diſplay of his providence, throughout the univerſality of worlds.

To ſuppoſe that God Almighty has confined his goodneſs to this world, to the excluſion of all others, is much ſimilar to the idle fancies of ſome individuals in this world, that they, and thoſe of their communion or faith, are the favorites of heaven, excluſively; but theſe are narrow and bigotted conceptions, which are degrading to a rational nature, and utterly unworthy of God, of whom we ſhould form the moſt exalted ideas.

FURTHERMORE, there could be no diſplay of goodneſs, or of any of the moral perfections of God, merely in repleting immenſity with a ſtupid creation of elements, or ſluggiſh ſenſeleſs and incogitative matter, which by nature may be ſuppoſed to be incapable of ſenſation, reflection and enjoyment: undoubtedly elements and material compoſitions were deſigned by God to ſubſerve rational beings, by conſtituting or ſupporting them in their reſpective modes of exiſtence, in this or thoſe other numerous worlds.

THERE may be in God's boundleſs empire of nature and providence, as many different ſorts of modified ſenſation, as there are different worlds and temperatures in immenſity; or at leaſt ſenſation may more or leſs vary; but whether their ſenſations agree in any or many reſpects, or not, or whether they agree with ours, or, if in any part, how far, are matters unknown to us; but that there are intelligent orders of beings, interſperſed through the creation of God, is a matter of the higheſt degree of rational certainty of any thing that falls ſhort of mathematical demonſtration, or of proofs which come within the reach of our outward ſenſations, called ſenſible demonſtration. For if this is the only world that is repleniſhed with life and reaſon, it includes the whole circumference of God's providence; for there would be no diſplay of wiſdom or goodneſs, merely in governing rude elements and ſenſeleſs matter, nor could there be any valuable end propoſed by ſuch a ſuppoſed government, or any happineſs, inſtruction or ſubſerviency to being in general, or any reaſon aſſigned, why ſuch a creation (for it cannot be a providence) ſhould have had the divine approbation, and conſequently we may be morally certain that rational beings are interſperſed co-extenſive with the creation of God.

Although the various orders of intelligences, throughout infinitude, differ ever ſo much in their manner of ſenſation, and conſequently in their manner of communication, or of receiving ideas, yet reaſon and conſciouſneſs muſt be the ſame in all; but not the ſame with reſpect to the various objects of the ſeveral worlds, though in nature the ſame. For inſtance, a perſon born blind cannot poſſibly have an idea of colours, though his ſenſibility of ſound and feeling may be as acute as ours; and ſince there are ſuch a variety of modes of ſenſation in this world, how vaſtly numerous may we apprehend them to be in immenſity? We ſhall ſoon by pondering on theſe things feel the inſufficiency of our imagination, to conceive of the immenſe poſſibility of the variety of their modes of ſenſation and the manner of intercourſe of cogitative beings. It may be objected that a man cannot ſubſiſt in the ſun; but does it follow from thence, that God cannot or has not conſtituted a nature peculiar to that fiery region, and cauſed it to be as natural and neceſſary for it to ſuck in and breathe out flames of fire, as it is for us to do the like in air. Numerous are the kinds of fiſhy animals, which can no other ways ſubſiſt but in the water, in which other animals would periſh, (amphibious ones excepted;) while other animals, in a variety of forms, either ſwifter or ſlower move on the ſurface of the earth, or wing the air: of theſe there are ſundry kinds, which during the ſeaſons of winter live without food; and many of the inſects which are really poſſeſſed of animal life, remain frozen, and as ſoon as they are let looſe by the kind influence of the ſun, they again aſſume their wonted animal life; and if animal life may differ ſo much in the ſame world, what inconceivable variety may be poſſible in worlds innumerable, as applicable to mental, cogitative and organized beings. Certain it is, that any ſuppoſed obſtructions, concerning the quality or temperature of any or every of thoſe worlds, could not have been any bar in the way of God Almighty, with regard to his repleniſhing his univerſal creation with moral agents. The unlimited perfection of God, could perfectly well adapt every part of his creation to the deſign of whatever rank or ſpecies of conſtituted beings, his God-like wiſdom and goodneſs ſaw fit to impart exiſtence to; ſo that as there is no deficiency of abſolute perfection in God, it is rationally demonſtrative that the immenſe creation is repleniſhed with rational agents, and that it has been eternally ſo, and that the diſplay of divine goodneſs muſt have been as perfect and complete, in the antecedent, as it is poſſible to be in the ſubſequent eternity.

From this theological way of arguing on the creation and providence of God, it appears that the whole, which we denominate by the term *nature*, which is the ſame as creation perfectly regulated, was eternally connected together by the creator to anſwer the ſame all glorious purpoſe, *to wit*; the diſplay of the divine nature, the conſequences of which are exiſtence and happineſs to being in general, ſo that creation with all its productions operates according to the laws of nature, and is ſuſtained by the ſelf-exiſtent eternal cauſe in perfect order and decorum, agreeable to the eternal wiſdom, unalterable rectitude, impartial juſtice and immenſe goodneſs of the divine nature, which is a ſummary of God's providence. It is from the eſtabliſhed ordinances of nature that ſummer and winter, rainy and fair ſeaſons, monſoons, refreſhing breezes, ſeed time and harveſt, day and night interchangeably ſucceed each other, and diffuſe their extenſive bleſſings to man. Every enjoyment and ſupport of life is from God, delivered to his creatures in and by the tendency, aptitude, diſpoſition and operation of thoſe laws. Nature is the medium, or intermediate inſtrument, through which God diſpenſes his benignity to mankind. The air we breathe in, the light of the ſun, and the waters of the murmuring rills, evince his providence: and well it is that they are given in ſo great profuſion that they cannot by the monopoly of the rich be engroſſed from the poor.

When we copiouſly purſue the ſtudy of nature, we are certain to be loſt in the immenſity of the works and wiſdom of God ; we may nevertheleſs, in a variety of things diſcern their fitneſs, happifying tendency and ſuſtaining quality to us ward, from all which, as rational and contemplative beings we are prompted to infer, that God is univerſally uniform and conſiſtent in his infinitude of creation and providence, although we cannot comprehend all that conſiſtency, by reaſon of infirmity, yet we are morally ſure, that of all poſſible plans, infinite wiſdom muſt have eternally adopted the beſt, and infinite goodneſs have approved it, and infinite power have perfected it. And as the good of being in general, muſt have been the ultimate end of God in his creation and government of his creatures, his omniſcience could not fail to have it always preſent in his view. Univerſal nature muſt therefore be ultimately attracted to this ſingle point, and infinite perfection muſt have eternally diſplayed itſelf in creation and providence. From hence we infer, that God is as eternal and infinite in his goodneſs, as his ſelf-exiſtent and perfect nature is omnipotently great.

SECTION VIII.

The Providence *of* GOD *does not interfere with the* Agency *of* Man.

MANKIND are more or leſs apt to confound their ideas of divine providence, with the actions or agency of man, which ought to be conſidered diſtinctly, inaſmuch as they are not one and the ſame; the former is the agency of God, by the intervention of the operations of nature, and the latter the agency of man. The providence of God ſupports the univerſe, and enables rational agents to act in certain limited ſpheres with a derived freedom, for otherwiſe it could not be denominated the agency of man, but of God. So likewiſe in our notions of the infinity of God, we ought to make a diſtinction between his eſſence and his creation. The infinity of the divine nature does not include all things, though it includes all poſſible perfection; if it included all things, it would include all imperfections alſo, which is inadmiſſible, nor does the providence of God include all manner of actions or agencies, it does not include the actions of free and accountable agents, for that they are more or leſs imperfect and ſinful; though his providence ſuſtains their power of agency, for God cannot controul the actions of free beings, ſince, if he did, it would be a contradiction to their being free. Neceſſity and freedom are in the diverſity of their natures diametrically oppoſed to each other, for which reaſon we cannot in truth be ſaid to act neceſſarily and freely in the ſame actions, and at the ſame time, any more than we can exiſt and not exiſt at the ſame time: nor is it poſſible for omnipotence itſelf to effect theſe or ſuch like contradictions, as they are attended with impoſſibilities in their own nature, for that if one part of a contradiction is true the other cannot be ſo.

SOME have deduced arguments for a proof of the fatality of the actions of mankind from a ſuppoſed preſcience of the knowledge of God, but there is not and cannot be any preſcience or foreknowledge in the omniſcient mind, for there is no firſt or laſt, beginning or end to the divine knowledge, but with him it is one eternal *now*, and cannot be divided into tenſes, epochas or ſucceſſion like ours. Succeſſion in knowledge is the diſtinguiſhing characteriſtick of a finite mind, it is knowing things by degrees or progreſſively, which method of attaining knowledge could never extend to the comprehenſion of the infinitude of things. But eternal and infinite knowledge is always the ſame, and always preſent with God, which neceſſarily precludes the notion of *before*, or *after*, in the divine knowledge, as much as unbounded ſpace excludes the notion of a centre, which can have no exiſtence without a circumference. Suppoſe a chain to be extended without end, which is the ſame as an eternal or infinite extenſion, none but the divine mind could comprehend its links, as a finite numeration could not aſcertain their number, nor would there be any firſt or laſt link to ſuch a premiſed chain: the compariſon will be the ſame, when we ſuppoſe an eternal ſeries of cauſes and events, in which there could not be a firſt cauſe, though there muſt have been an eternal one, ſo that God cannot be the firſt cauſe of all things, as argued in the fourth ſection of the firſt chapter. And as the eternal cauſe was not a firſt cauſe, ſo there can be no firſt or laſt knowledge to an omniſcient eternal mind. But it may be objected, that though the knowledge of God be admitted to be always the ſame, without addition, diminution, or ſucceſſion, yet his omniſcience of the actions of mankind (in time) as well as that of things in general, was eternal, and therefore in the divine mind had a previous exiſtence to the actions themſelves, and conſequently human actions muſt neceſſarily have taken place exactly as they have done, or God would have been imperfect in knowledge, which by ſome is thought to militate againſt the liberty of man. But it ſhould be conſidered that though the knowledge of the actions of mankind, exiſted in the divine mind, previous to the actions themſelves having been acted in time; nevertheleſs thoſe actions of man were not neceſſarily produced from that knowledge in God, but on the contrary the actions of mankind neceſſitate his knowledge. For had it not been for the reality of thoſe actions in time, the eternal mind could not have had the knowledge of them, inaſmuch as God could not have known falſehood to have been truth; the eternal knowledge of God was therefore predicated, or grounded, on the facts of thoſe actions; ſo that inſtead of the actions of mankind being neceſſitated, they neceſſitate the knowledge of God: as for example, I will premiſe that the reader ſees me move my hand, the motion in this caſe neceſſitated him to know it; and inaſmuch as God is eternally omniſcient, it neceſſitated him to know it eternally, as much as it did the reader in time.

God is eternally and infinitely capacious, and therefore neceſſarily knows all things, and his omniſcience is as much neceſſitated by the truth of facts, as the knowledge of man. From hence we infer that the actions of mankind may be free, but that the omniſcience of God is neceſſary, as it is a neceſſary perfection of the divine nature to know all things, but that which never exiſts cannot be known by God or man. It is therefore facts, which conſtitute truth, and neceſſarily produce all knowledge both divine and human; and as the omniſcience of God is predicated on truth, it muſt reſpect the natural and moral worlds with that intrinſic difference, which truly ſubſiſts between them.

It is manifeſt that natural bodies gravitate and are governed by fate, but that rational beings are not. But whether mankind act neceſſarily or freely, can never be inferred merely from the eternal omniſcience of God, for if ſo be that the actions of mankind be admitted to be either neceſſary or free, it could not be the knowledge of God, which makes them to be as they are; nor does the knowledge of God alter them; but they have their intrinſic nature independent of the omniſcience of God; and upon which his omniſcience was eternally predicated: ſo that was it poſſible, that they could not be known, or that they were not known by God, their actions would nevertheleſs be either neceſſary or free, as in truth they are in their own nature, nor does the knowing or not knowing of them, either by God or man, alter their nature, whether neceſſary or free: for truth is uniform, and the omniſcience of God cannot fail to be predicated thereon, for otherwiſe God could not be omniſcient: ſo that in very deed God knows the actions of mankind to be what in truth they are, the divine preſcience being neceſſitated by reality. To ſuppoſe the conduct or demeanour of mankind to have been predetermined by God, and effected merely by his providence, is a manifeſt infringement of his juſtice and goodneſs in the conſtitution of our mental powers, in giving us a falſe and erroneous conſciouſneſs of guilt, thereby making us mentally miſerable through deception, or mere imaginary apprehenſion of vicious actions, in which we are wholly paſſive, being actuated by the ſuperintending power of the univerſe, and conſequently not at all blameable for what we do, and in no other ſenſe guilty but from the fallacious repreſentations of a deluded conſcience; which according to the premiſed truth of things wholly exculpates us from it, and which if we knew to be true, the notion of ſin would ſet as eaſy on our minds as a glove on our hand. Therefore a predetermination of the actions or conduct of mankind, is inadmiſſible, for it is injurious to the divine character (among men) to ſuppoſe it, as it would make God the author of moral evil to the excluſion of his offending creatures, or exclude moral evil from the univerſe; and if ſo, there need no farther diſpute about it.

Mankind in general, in their notions or writings on the freedom of their actions, blend it with mechaniſm, which is not ſtrange, for it is almoſt impoſſible to deſcribe human liberty in its intrinſic genuine nature, free from a compulſive alloy of one kind or other; the univerſe all around us being ſubjected to the laws of fate, our bodily ſenſorium not excepted, ſo that there is not any thing in the univerſe analagous to, or any ways reſembling intelligent nature with which we can with any propriety compare it: and as the principle of intelligence itſelf, is diverſe from all other ſort of exiſtencies with which we are converſant, ſo the nature and manner of its action or exertion of its powers, is ſpecifically different from all other things, which renders analogy impertinent. All matter, which we have any conception of, is governed by the almighty influence of fate in its various and extenſive operations, and well it is that it is thus regulated and made ſubſervient to rational nature. The natural palpitation of the heart, the beating of the pulſe and gravitation of our bodies, with the other laws of our animal nature, are as mechanical as the movements of our ſolar ſyſtem; every thing therefore in the univerſe is ſubject to the laws of fate, except the actions or exertions of moral beings only, which are by nature free, and which by intuition we know to be ſo, without argumentative demonſtration to prove it, the knowledge of it being eſſential to all intelligent natures; and all the difficulties, which ever have been ſtarted againſt its reality, have been owing to the weakneſs of our reaſonings. It is in conſequence of this intuitive certainty, that we are free, that our conſciences acquit or condemn us in all our actions and deportment of life, and from this conſciouſneſs of liberty reſults all our mental happineſs and miſery, praiſe or blame, and from which we deduce all our notions of virtue or vice, or of accountability. But when we aſſay to inveſtigate the liberty of the will, or the intrinſic nature of freedom, or wherein it conſiſts, we are apt to be more or leſs confounded or embarraſſed with the laws of fate, with which we are cloſely ſurrounded, and for want of ſkill to diſtinguiſh liberty from compulſion, involve it (in our miſtaken notions) with the operations of thoſe mechanical laws; and ſo finally draw irregular inferences againſt the reality of it; concluding that mind as well as matter, is under the compulſive influence of the laws of fate; though at the ſame time, ſuch a concluſion is diametrically oppoſite to our intuitive certainty of the contrary. And after all, we cannot but feel ourſelves guilty, or not guilty, according to the preſcriptions of our own conſciences, and are mentally happy or miſerable on the preſumption of our intuitive knowledge of the freedom of our agency, which never fails to fruſtrate all our unphiloſophical theory, which militates againſt it. For the conſciouſneſs of liberty, with which our underſtandings are impreſſed by intuition, is natural and true, and will have its effects on our conſciences, in ſpite of our theorical ſpeculations of the deſtiny of our actions. The freedom of our actions, from which virtue and vice became poſſible in the nature of man, was implanted in our minds coeval with the exerciſe of reaſon; or the knowledge of moral good and evil; and though our reaſonings on this important ſubject may be too much tinctured with the fatality of things about us, and our concluſions more or leſs faulty and erroneous, yet our intuition of the reality of our liberty cannot be a deception, for it is the invariable voice of all rational nature, that muſt have had the ſanction of divinity, intuitively promulgated to rational nature univerſally, which lays the foundation of agency, and conſequently of accountability, at the ſupreme bar of God, or the vicegerency of our own conſciences: for it is diſguſtfully abſurd to common ſenſe to ſuppoſe, that neceſſary beings ſhould be commended or diſcommended, puniſhed or rewarded, for their deſtined or paſſive actions. Had it been in the nature of things poſſible for God to have made moral agents act neceſſarily, undoubtedly they would have been reſtrained from wickedneſs, and mechanically moved to the practice of that which we now call virtue, (though it would loſe its nature if ſubjected to the laws of fate,) and have been made mechanically happy, which would have prevented the confuſions and diſorders of the moral world, and the miſeries which have enſued in conſequence thereof. But it was in the nature and fitneſs of things impoſſible, for God to have conſtituted a rational nature excluſive of liberty; for that it naturally and neceſſarily reſults from ſuch a nature, or is congenial with it, ſo that the one cannot exiſt without the other; in conſequence whereof moral evil became poſſible, and has had acceſs to this world, merely through the vicious agency of man, which has been the deſtruction not only of individuals, but of families, republics, kingdoms and empires, whatever effects it may produce in the ſucceeding ſtage of our exiſtence.

It has been a great diſpute in the ſchools, whether an aſs would not ſtarve to death between two mows, or parcels of choice hay, equally good, and equidiſtant from him, and but juſt out of his reach, merely for want of a preponderating motive to chuſe to which of the two to apply himſelf, to ſatisfy his hunger. However, it is more than probable that the ſagacity of the aſs in ſuch circumſtances, would exceed the theory of thoſe, who in ſuch a caſe, devote him to death in their ſpeculation. The ſame ſort of ſpeculation has, by ſome, been thought to hold good, as applied to the motives of human actions and conduct in general; arguing that we cannot act without motives, and that among a plurality of them, a preponderating one is repuiſite, to determine the act of choice, or of the will; that if the motives or inducements are ſuppoſed to be equal, they would counterballance each other; for the illuſtration of the argument, they allude to mechanical ſimilies, as that of ſcales and ſteelyards, which may be ballanced with equal weights to the ſuſpenſion of their motion, and which by preponderating weights turn their beam; and thus, by erroneouſly making application of mechanical compariſons to actions of a moral nature, loſe ſight of their liberty. Or as water is ſaid to run freely or without conſtraint, in like manner ſome ſuppoſe, that man acts freely from the ſtrongeſt motives, which motives in the order of nature, extrinſically aud neceſſarily determine all their actions, and which are nevertheleſs as free as the running of water in its natural courſe, or as the preponderation of the beam of the ſcales or ſteelyards, by the preponderating inducement of a heavier weight. But it ſhould be conſidered, that the eſſence of intelligent nature does not occupy ſpace as material beings do; nor is it corporeal, or compoſed of matter; it is not heavy or light, round or ſquare, long or ſhort, black or white: What then is it like? Why it is like itſelf, or as Doctor Watts expreſſeth it,

“ *There's nothing like it round the pole,*
“ *Nothing can deſcribe the ſoul.*”

Nor can the motion of water, which is governed by gravitation, or the preponderation of the beam of ſteelyards or ſcales, which are neceſſarily acted upon by the ſame law, or any other movements or operations of nature or art, be analogous to the acts of the mind, or admit of any juſt compariſon, which has been the cauſe of confuſion, in all writers who have attempted it.

For the eſſence of thinking beings, and their manner of acting, is eſſentially diſtinct from all and every part of the univerſe beſides, and every ſimile or compariſon, which we draw from thence, ſerves only to confound or perplex a juſt arrangement of ideas of our exalted intelligent nature, and the ſuperlative manner of its exertions or operations, which we depreciate (ideally) by deducing its character of nature or action, from matter, figure and motion, with their various modifications, effects or combinations, either animate or inanimate; though it is very natural to repreſent the liberty of the mind by external analogies. One of the Indians of this country being aſked, what his ſoul was? gave for anſwer "It is my think." This was both laconic and pertinent; and with reſpect to our liberty, it is impoſſible for us to obtain a greater certainty that we are free agents, than that which we naturally derive from the intuition of it. So that the greateſt philoſopher, and the humble and unlearned peaſant, are in this reſpect on a level, being each of them conſcious that they are free; from which ſentiment it is, that we blame ourſelves and our ſpecies, when we or they depart from the conduct of reaſon.

As long as the human conſcience will be a ſource of mental happineſs or miſery to the ſpecies, it avails nothing to teach the doctrine of the neceſſity of our actions, as nature will make us approve or diſapprove of ourſelves, according to our proficiencies in moral good or evil. If nature is in the fault (which is inadmiſſible) and gives us an erroneous conſciouſneſs concerning our liberty, and conſequently of moral good and evil, yet, as long as nature (or conſcience) remain the ſame, our intelligent reflections and apprehenſions of merit, or demerit, will alſo remain the ſame; which cannot fail to be attended with the like conſequences of tranquility and happineſs, or of guilt and miſery; ſo that if nature has deceived us in thoſe matters, we can have no remedy to appeaſe a guilty conſcience, unleſs our calviniſtical clergy could in good earneſt beat it into our heads, that our conſciouſneſs of guilt or blame is a mere deluſion, and that in truth God Almighty eternally deſigned and predeſtinated all our actions: ſuch a faith as this, was it poſſible, might cure a guilty conſcience; but I believe, that the God of nature, has ſo ſtrongly implanted his law in the human ſoul, that the teachers of fataliſm can never eraſe it, but that conſcience will forever give ſuch teachers the lye, though a part of mankind may, and have given a tacit and traditional aſſent to that unreaſonable doctrine.

The doctrine of fate has been made uſe of in armies as a policy to induce ſoldiers to face danger. Mahomet taught his army that the "term of every man's life was fixed by God, and that none could ſhorten it, by any hazard that he might ſeem to be expoſed to in battle or otherwiſe," but that it ſhould be introduced into peaceable and civil life, and be patronized by any teachers of religion, is quite ſtrange, as it ſubverts religion in general, and renders the teaching of it unneceſſary: except among other neceſſary events it may be premiſed, that it is neceſſary that they teach that doctrine, and that I oppoſe it from the influence of the ſame law of fate, upon which theſis we are all diſputing and acting in certain neceſſary circles, and if ſo, I make another neceſſary movement, which is, to diſcharge the public teachers of this doctrine, and expend their ſalaries in an œconomical manner, which might better anſwer the purpoſes of our happineſs, or lay it out in good wine or old ſpirits to make the heart glad, and laugh at the ſtupidity or cunning of thoſe who would have made us mere machines.

Some advocates for the doctrine of fate will alſo maintain that we are free agents, notwithſtanding they tell us there has been a concatenation of cauſes and events, which has reached from God down to this time, and which will eternally be continued; that has and will controul and bring about every action of our lives, though there is not any thing in nature more certain than that we cannot act neceſſarily and freely, in the ſame action, and at the ſame time, yet it is hard for ſuch perſons, who have verily believed that they are elected (and thus by a predetermination of God become his ſpecial favorites) to give up their notions of a predetermination of all events, upon which ſyſtem their election and everlaſting happineſs is nonſenſically founded; and on the other hand, it is alſo hard for them to go ſo evidently againſt the law of nature (or dictates of conſcience) which intuitively evinces the certainty of human liberty, as to reject ſuch evidence; and therefore hold to both parts of the contradiction, *to wit*, that they act neceſſarily, and freely, upon which contradictory principle, they endeavour to maintain the dictates of natural conſcience, and alſo, their darling folly of being electedly and excluſively favorites of God.

Such perſons, very commonly argue, that the preſcience, predetermination, or decrees of God, are by neceſſary conſequences the ſame in reſult; and that they equally effect human agency; and as it is generally admitted, that God has an eternal omniſcience of human agency, therefore they infer, that the conduct or actions of mankind are neceſſary; as ſay they, it muſt be conformable to the divine preſcience, for otherwiſe, God would be imperfect in knowledge: not conſidering that God cannot know that a free agent acts neceſſarily, or that a neceſſary agent acts freely, but that he knows things, or facts, to be as in truth they are; ſo that provided we act freely, God knows we act freely, but if neceſſarily, he knows we act neceſſarily. Yet it may be further argued, on the principles of fate, that there was a certainty in human actions, or they could not have been known. True, but this certainty did not proceed from the divine preſcience, but from human agency, therefore, if our agency is free, it is certain that it is free, but if neceſſary, it is certain that it is neceſſary; ſo that the certainty of our actions, or the divine preſcience of them, are both reſolved into the nature or reality of them; nor is there any other preſcience or certainty, relative to human agency, but what reſults from its intrinſic nature. Therefore the argument deducible from eternal preſcience, or certainty, will as well apply to the liberty of human agency, as to the deſtiny thereof. Upon the whole, we may rationally conclude, that inſtead of our actions being neceſſitated by the divine preſcience, they neceſſitate it; inaſmuch, as the knowledge of God or man, muſt be predicated on truth, and truth cannot fail of being predicated on nature: nature is therefore our polar ſtar, to direct us relative to the queſtion of the liberty or deſtiny of our actions in life, for though it be admitted, that our deportment in life be either neceſſary or free, yet it is not the knowledge of God, or of any other intelligencies that makes it to be as it is; but our agency muſt be reſolved into the nature of it, this it is that will determine whether it is free or not, and this it is which neceſſitates the divine preſcience. For God not only knows the particular conduct or actions of his creatures, but alſo the manner of their actions, and it is the manner of their actions which muſt determine whether they are neceſſary or free, and it is the nature of their actions which muſt aſcertain the manner of them, and the divine preſcience is predicated thereon.

From the foregoing arguments we infer, that it is from the intrinſic nature of our actions we muſt deduce the important concluſion of their freedom or fatality, and not from the preſcience or mere knowledge of God.

A predetermination of human actions, by God, would truly amount to the ſame as his decree of them, theſe phraſes are ſynonimous, and both of them include the exertion of the divine will, in all the particular actions of mankind, inaſmuch as whatever God wills, by a predetermination of events, is as abſolutely binding and neceſſary in its conſequences, as his decreeing thoſe events could poſſibly be. But the divine preſcience amounts to nothing more than a mere knowledge of human actions, in which the will or determination of God may have had no manner of influence, cauſe or concernment, and which may be reſolved wholly into the free agency of man.

From what has been remarked on this ſubject, it appears, that a divine decree or predetermination of the agency of mankind, would involve them in fatal neceſſity, but that the preſcience of God does not determine whether their actions are neceſſary or free.

The ſubject of human agency, is in many reſpects intricate, difficult and perplexed, and has been made more ſo, in conſequence of the artifice and ſophiſtry of party writers, and would need a volumn to clearly inveſtigate it, which at a future period I purpoſe to do, and therefore in this conciſe ſyſtem have only touched the great outlines of the ſubject and argued thereon as far as my ſyſtem required, which is to exclude human agency from the providence of God: for if a certain concatenation of cauſes and events, relative to human actions, have been by the author of nature extended to mankind, which has actuated them, then it would follow that God only has been an active being in this world, and that by his arrangement of cauſes and events, he has actuated mankind, or been the efficient cauſe of their agency; which would involve the Deity in guilt, or exclude moral evil from the world.

THIS conſideration alone, is abundantly ſufficient to eſtabliſh the *reality of man's freedom* for ever; which at the ſame time coincides with our *conſciouſneſs of it*, and upon which all our notions of *right and wrong*, or of *moral good and evil*, are founded.

WE ſhall conclude this ſection and chapter with a few curſory obſervations on St. Paul's diſquiſition of the ſubject of election or predeſtination, which is to be found in his ninth chapter of Romans. "*But when Rebecca alſo had conceived by one, even by our father Iſaac, for the children not being yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpoſe of God according to election might ſtand not of works but of him that calleth, it was ſaid unto her the elder ſhall ſerve the younger, as it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Eſau have I hated. What ſhall we ſay then, is there unrighteouſneſs with God? God forbid, for he ſaith unto Moſes, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy; and I will have compaſſion on whom I will have compaſſion; ſo that it is not of him that willeth or of him that* *runneth, but of God that ſheweth mercy; for the ſcripture ſaith unto Pharoah, even for this ſame purpoſe have I raiſed thee up, that I might ſhew my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth. Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth. Thou wilt ſay then unto me why doth he yet find fault for who hath reſiſted his will?*" To this objection the Apoſtle attempts to argue, "*Nay, but O man, who art thou that replieſt againſt God! ſhall the thing formed ſay of him that formed it why haſt thou made me thus? hath not the potter power over the clay of the ſame lump to make one veſſel unto honor and another unto diſhonor? what if God, willing to ſhew his wrath and to make his power known, endured with much long ſuffering, the veſſels of wrath fitted to deſtruction.*"

From the foregoing quotation, as well as from the reading of St. Paul's epiſtles in general, it is manifeſt that he held ſtrenuouſly to the doctrine of predeſtination, or election, of a certain part of mankind to the favour and ſalvation of God, and excluded the reſidue of them, as in the inſtance of Jacob and Eſau, "*Jacob have I loved, but Eſau have I hated.*" and the cauſe (not the reaſon) given for God's love of the one and hatred of the other, is "*That the purpoſe of God, according to elec-*

tion, might ſtand not of works but of him that calleth;" and to more fully exclude the agency, or works of Jacob and Eſau, from having any influence or concern in the election of Jacob and hatred of Eſau, it is ſaid, "*The children not having yet been born, or having done any good or evil.*" From this example the Apoſtle proceeds to Moſes's hiſtory of Pharoah, "*Even for this ſame purpoſe have I raiſed thee up, that I might ſhew my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth*;" and the cauſe aſſigned for the deſtruction of Pharoah, is, "*Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth*;" again, "*it is not of him that willeth, or of him that runneth, but of God that ſheweth mercy*;" and again, "*I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compaſſion on whom I will have compaſſion.*"

When I was a boy, by one means or other, I had conceived a very bad opinion of Pharoah, he ſeem'd to me to be a cruel deſpotic Prince, he would not give the Iſraelites ſtraw, but nevertheleſs demanded of them the full tale of brick; for a time he oppoſed God Almighty, but was at laſt luckily drowned in the red ſea, at which event, with other good chriſtians, I rejoiced, and even exulted at the overthrow of the baſe and wicked

Tyrant; but after a few years of maturity, and examination of the hiſtory of that monarch, given by Moſes, with the before recited remarks of the Apoſtle, I conceived a more favorable opinion of him, in aſmuch as we are told that God raiſed him up, and hardened his heart, and predeſtinated his reign, his wickedneſs and overthrow. But to return to the Apoſtle's doctrine of fate, with his objection againſt it, "*Thou wilt then ſay unto me, why doth he,* (viz. God) *yet find fault, for who hath reſiſted his will?*" This is a home objection to the doctrine of predeſtination, which the Apoſtle never anſwered; it will apply in all poſſible caſes of human agency, as well as in thoſe relative to Jacob and Eſau, or Pharoah; why did God hate Eſau, or puniſh Pharoah, was not their actions and death perfectly agreeable to his predeſtination, or will? and if ſo, "*Why doth he yet find fault, for who hath reſiſted his will?*" And on the poſition of the deſtiny or preordination of human agency, who can reſiſt the divine will? ſurely ſuch dependent weak creatures as men cannot fruſtrate or make void the predeſtination or deſign of God: human art or power, is, in every ſenſe, very inadequate to ſuch an undertaking; for omnipotence can and will affect the decrees of a God, and if the agency of moral beings is included in the divine decrees, or in the predeſtination of all events, then the conduct of Eſau, Pharoah, and every individual of the human race, muſt have had the divine approbation; and if ſo, the Apoſtle's objection is concluſive, to wit, "*Why doth he yet find fault, for who hath reſiſted his will?*" We will nevertheleſs advert to the Apoſtle's diſcuſſion of this objection, who ſays, "*Nay, but O man, who art thou that replieſt againſt God? ſhall the thing formed ſay of him that formed it, why haſt thou made me thus?*" We readily grant, that any intelligent being, who by the condition of nature, or God's providence, is better than not to be, can have no juſt complaint againſt God's providence: but on the poſition that God has given being to any of his creatures, which, under the direction of his providence, is worſe than not to be; (which on the poſition of eternal damnation muſt be admitted) ſuch creatuers would have juſt ground of complaint, that God had (tothem involuntarily) given them a being which was worſe than non-exiſtence.

The Apoſtle proceeds to argue againſt his objection, "*Hath not the votter power over the clay, of the ſame lump to make one veſſel to honor and another to diſhonor.*" This is a compariſon brought from incogitative matter, which is deſtitute of ſenſation, reflection, or of honor, or diſhonor, happineſs or miſery, and therefore makes nothing for or againſt the ſolution of the Apoſtle's argument, as not being applicable to the government of rational beings; for it is of no conſequence to a lump of clay, whether it be moulded into the figure of a wine glaſs or a chamber utenſil. "*What if God willing to ſhew his wrath and make his power known.*" Still the objection comes with full force, why is God wrath at the conduct of any of his creatures? "*Who hath reſiſted his will?*" There is no finite being that ever has or could reſiſt it, therefore, according to the Apoſtle's doctrine, every thing terminates agreeable to the divine predeſtination; *ergo*, there is no fault or blame ſays the objection, for, "*Who hath reſiſted his will?*" The conduct of creatures is all perfectly right on this ſtating of the caſe. "*And makes his power known.*" That the Creator and upholder of the univerſe, ſhould make his power known, by neceſſitating his creatures to rebel againſt and diſobey him, and then puniſh them for it, is diametrically repugnant to our ideas of juſtice, and of the divine character. The power of creating and ſuſtaining the univerſe is infinite, and thus God makes his power known; but the power of doing injuſtice ſhould never be aſcribed to him. Nor is there any propriety in aſcribing the paſſion of anger or wrath to God (though it be admitted that mankind are free agents, and conſequently juſtly blameable for their violations of the law of reaſon) for any being, who is capable of the paſſion of anger, or wrath, muſt be admitted to be mutable, which is incompatible with the divine perfection; but for God to be wrath with his creatures, on the Apoſtle's poſition of his predeſtinating their actions, would be in reality the ſame as to be wrath with himſelf, ſince on the theſis of deſtiny, God muſt have been the efficient cauſe of the actions, or conduct of his creatures. "*Endured with much long ſuffering, the veſſels of wrath fitted to deſtruction.*" This long ſuffering is unintelligible upon the Apoſtle's theme of predeſtination; for if we can underſtand any thing from it, it ſuppoſes that we are free agents, and that God, in his "*long ſufferings,*" gives his creatures an opportunity to repent and reform; but ſuch a ſuppoſition would be giving his doctrine the lye, for there could be no "*long*" (nor ſhort) "*ſuffering,*" to the final advantage of creatures predeſtinated and fitted "*to deſtruction,*" in this caſe there could be no remedy, forbearance, or "*long ſuffering.*" Finally, St. Paul did not in the leaſt, confute his objection "*Who hath reſiſted his will?*" The ſubſtance of all he ſaid to juſtify divine providence in electing part of the human race and rejecting the reſt, or of his loving Jacob, hating Eſau, and drowning Pharoah, was only this "*For I will have mercy, on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compaſſion, on whom I will have compaſſion,*" that is, *I will becauſe I will.*

CHAPTER

Chapter III.

SECTION I.

The Doctrine *of the* Infinite Evil *of* Sin *conſidered.*

THAT God is infinitely good in the eternal diſplays of his providence has been argued in the ſeventh ſection of the ſecond chapter, from which we infer, that there cannot be an infinite evil in the univerſe, inaſmuch as it would be incompatible with infinite good; yet there are many who imbibe the doctrine of the infinite evil of ſin, and the maxim on which they predicate their arguments in its ſupport, are, that the greatneſs of ſin, or adequateneſs of its puniſhment, is not to be meaſured, or its viciouſneſs aſcertained by the capacity and circumſtances of the offender, but by the capacity and dignity of the being againſt whom the offence is committed; and as every tranſgreſſion is againſt the authority and law of God, it is therefore againſt God; and as God is infinite, therefore ſin is an infinite evil; and from hence infer the infinite and vindictive wrath of God againſt ſinners, and of his juſtice in dooming them, as ſome ſay, to infinite, and as others ſay, to eternal miſery; the one without degree or meaſure, and the other without end of duration.

Admitting this maxim for truth, that the tranſgreſſions or ſins of mankind are to be eſtimated, as to their heiniouſneſs, by the dignity and infinity of the divine nature, then it will follow, that all ſins would be equal; which would confound all our notions of the degrees or aggravations of ſin; ſo that the ſin would be the ſame to kill my neighbour as it would be to kill his horſe: For the divine nature, by this maxim, being the rule by which man's ſin is to be eſtimated, and always the ſame, there could therefore be no degrees in ſin or guilt, any more than there are degrees of perfection in God, whom we all admit to be infinite, and who for that reaſon only cannot admit of any degrees or enlargement. Therefore as certain as there are degrees in ſin, the infinity of the divine nature cannot be the ſtandard whereby it is to be aſcertained; which ſingle conſideration is a ſufficient confutation of the doctrine of the infinite evil of ſin, as predicated on that maxim; inaſmuch

much as none are ſo ſtupid as not to diſcern that there are degrees and aggravations in ſin.

I RECOLLECT a diſcourſe of a learned Eccleſiaſtic, who was labouring in ſupport of this doctrine, his firſt propoſition was: "*That moral rectitude was infinitely pleaſing to God.*" From which he deduced this inference, viz; "*That a contrariety to moral rectitude was conſequently infinitely diſpleaſing to God, and infinitely evil.*" That the abſolute moral rectitude of the divine nature is infinitely well pleaſing to God, will not be diſputed; for this is none other but perfect and infinite rectitude; but there cannot in nature be an infinite contrariety thereto, or any being infinitely evil, or infinite in any reſpect whatever; except we admit a ſelf-exiſtent and infinite diabolical nature, which is too abſurd to deſerve argumentative confutation. Therefore, as all poſſible moral evil muſt reſult from the agency of finite beings, conſiſting in their ſinful deviations from the rules of eternal unerring order and reaſon, which is moral rectitude in the abſtract; we infer, that, provided *all finite beings in the univerſe*, had not done any thing elſe but ſin and rebel againſt God, reaſon and moral rectitude in general; all poſſible moral evil would fall as much ſhort of being infinite, as all finite capacities, complexly conſidered, would fail of being infinite;

which would bear no proportion at all. For tho' *finite minds*, as has been before argued, bear a *reſemblance to God*, yet they bear *no proportion* to his *infinity*; and therefore there is not and cannot be any being, beings, or agency of being or beings, complexly conſidered or otherwiſe, which are infinite in capacity, or which are infinitely evil and deteſtable in the ſight of God, in that unlimited ſenſe; for the *actions* or *agency* of *limited beings* are alſo *limited*, which is the ſame as *finite*: ſo that both the virtues and vices of man are finite; they are not virtuous or vicious but in degree; therefore moral evil is finite and bounded.

THOUGH there is one and but one infinite good, which is God, and there can be no diſpute, but that God judges, and approves or diſapproves of all things and beings, and agencies of beings, as in truth they are, or in other words judges of every thing as being what it is; but to judge a *finite evil* to be *infinite*, would be *infinitely erroneous* and diſproportionable: for ſo certain as there is a diſtinction between *infinity* and *finitude*, ſo certain finite *ſinful agency* cannot be *infinitely evil*: or in other words *finite offences* cannot be *infinite*. Nor is it poſſible that the greateſt of ſinners ſhould in juſtice deſerve infinite puniſhment, or their nature ſuſtain it; *finite beings* may as well be ſuppoſed to be capable of *infinite happineſs* as of *infinite miſery*, but the rank which they hold in the univerſe exempts them from either: it nevertheleſs admits them to a ſtate of agency, probation or trial, conſequently to interchangeable progreſſions in moral good and evil, and of courſe to alternate happineſs or miſery. We will diſmiſs the doctrine of the *infinite evil of ſin* with this obſervation, that as no *mere creature* can ſuffer an *infinitude* of miſery or of puniſhment, it is therefore incompatible with the wiſdom of God, ſo far to capacitate creatures to ſin, as in his conſtitution of things to foreclose himſelf from *adequately* puniſhing them for it.

SECTION II.

The Moral GOVERNMENT *of* GOD *incompatible with eternal* PUNISHMENT.

HAVING conſidered the doctrine of the infinite evil of ſin, we proceed to the conſideration of that of eternal damnation. Though it is in the nature of things impoſſible, that an infinite weight of puniſhment ſhould be inflicted on the wicked, nevertheleſs, admitting a never ending puniſhment on them to be juſt and conſiſtent with the moral government of God, it would be in itſelf poſſible. Therefore in order to determine the queſtion concerning eternal puniſhment, (which cannot be eternal with reſpect to the preceeding eternity, though it may be poſſible with reſpect to that which ſucceeds the æra of the exiſtence of the wicked,) we muſt advert to the providence of God, as it reſpects the moral world particularly. That God in his creation and providence ultimately deſigned the good of being in general, has been clearly evinced in the preceeding pages; nor can this doctrine of the divine munificence be objected to, except it is diſputed whether God be a good and gracious being or not, which to do would be highly criminal: for a good being would have good purpoſes the ultimate end of its conduct, though it be ſuppoſed to be a mere creature, but perfectly ſo as applicable to the œconomy of God, who muſt be ſuppoſed to have had the good and happineſs of his creation, the ultimate end and deſign of his providence.

THE wiſeſt and beſt of men may not ſucceed in their benevolent purpoſes to ſerve mankind, for want of wiſdom, opportunity or power; but this is no ways applicable to God, who can and will effect the ultimate purpoſes of his providence. Such expreſſions as theſe may be thought to militate againſt the agency of man; but it ought to be conſidered, that though God has implanted a principle of liberty in our minds, it is in ſome reſpects limited; he has not put it in our power eternally to ruin ourſelves, for our agency is as eternal as our exiſtence; ſo that the agency of this life cannot conſtitute an eternal happineſs or miſery for us in this world or worlds to come, but our agency in its particular periods is temporary, and ſo are its rewards and puniſhments. For as our minds cannot comprehend eternity, ſo neither can the conſequences of our agency, which is happineſs or miſery extend to it; for we are limited beings and act in certain circumferences in all and every reſpect, except as to exiſtence without end; and this it is which renders our agency eternal as it reſpects the ſucceeding eternity: God's government of the natural and moral worlds is the ſame as his providence, ſo that when we ſpeak of the moral government of God, we mean that diſplay of his providence which reſpects moral beings: The former is governed by fate, but the latter by rewards and puniſhments.

It is from the knowledge of right and wrong, good and evil that we are capable of moral government; and it is from the deficiency of this principle of knowledge, in the natural world, that it is ſubjected to mechanical laws, ſo that the natural world includes every part of the creation, which is below the dignity of a rational nature, which cannot be ſubject to mechanical operations, but is in the order of things more exalted than groſs creation, conſiſting of elements or matter variouſly compounded, tempered and modified, with its coheſion, attraction and all other of its qualities, properties, proportions, motions and harmony of the whole. And as the natural world is made ſubſervient to the moral, the government of it may therefore be truly and properly ſaid to belong to the providence of God, which it otherwiſe could not, inaſmuch as rational beings are benefited thereby; but the government of mere material, inanimate and unintelligent beings, abſtractly conſidered from moral beings, could not have been an object of divine providence, nor would ſuch a ſuppoſed government conſtitute a providence; inaſmuch as it would be void of ſenſibility, happineſs and goodneſs. This being premiſed, we proceed more particularly to the conſideration of the moral government of God, in the exerciſe whereof it is not to be ſuppoſed, that he would counteract his eternal plan of doing good to, and happifying being in general; and inaſmuch as eternal puniſhment is incompatible with this great and fundamental principle of wiſdom and goodneſs, we may for certain conclude, that ſuch a puniſhment will never have the divine approbation

probation, or be inflicted on any intelligent being or beings in the infinitude of the government of God. For an endleſs puniſhment defeats the very end of its inſtitution, which in all wiſe and good governments is as well to reclaim offenders, as to be examples to others; but a government, which does not admit of reformation and repentance, muſt unavoidably involve its ſubjects in miſery; for the weakneſs of creatures will always be a ſource of error and inconſtancy, and a wiſe governor, as we muſt admit God to be, would ſuit his governmet to the capacity and all other circumſtances of the governed; and inſtead of inflicting eternal damnation on his offending children, would rather interchangeably extend his benificience with his vindictive puniſhments, ſo as to alienate them from ſin and wickedneſs, and incline them to morality; convincing them from experimental ſuffering, that ſin and vanity are their greateſt enemies, and that in GOD and *moral rectitude* their *dependence* and *true happineſs* conſiſts, and by reclaiming them from *wickedneſs and error*, to the *truth*, and to *the love and practice of virtue*, give them occaſion to *glorify* GOD *for the wiſdom and goodneſs of his government*, and to be ultimately happy under it. But we are told that the eternal damnation of a part of mankind greatly augments the happineſs of the elect, who are repreſented as being vaſtly the leſs numerous, (a diabolical temper of mind in the elect :) Beſides, how narrow and contracted muſt ſuch notions of infinite juſtice and goodneſs be ? Who would imagine that the Deity conducts his providence ſimilar to the deteſtable deſpots of this world ? O *horrible* moſt *horrible impeachment* of DIVINE GOODNESS ! rather let us exaltedly ſuppoſe that God eternally had the ultimate beſt good of being, generally and individually in his view, with the reward of the virtuous and the puniſhment of the vicious, and that no other puniſhent will ever be inflicted, merely *by the divine adminiſtration*, but what will *finally* terminate in the BEST GOOD of the PUNISHED, and thereby ſubſerve the great and important ends of the divine government, and be productive of *the reſtoration and felicity of all finite rational nature.*

MANKIND in general ſeems to be evidently impreſſed with a ſenſe and ſtrong expectation of judgment to come, after animal life is ended ; wherein the diſorders, injuſtice and wickedneſs, which have been acted by rational agents, ſhall be fully and righteouſly adjuſted, and the delinquents puniſhed ; and that ſuch, who obey the laws of reaſon, or moral rectitude, may be rewarded according to their works : this apprehenſion is ſo general with all denominations and ſectaries of men, that it is rather the intuition of nature than mere tradition. It is nevertheleſs to be conſidered, that this notion of accountability, and judgment to come, has not gone ſo far as to determine, whether the incorrigible ſinner, from the cloſe of human life, ſhall be everlaſtingly debarred from reformation and repentance, and precluded from the favour of God or not; but having taught a juſt and righteous judgment, left it as the prerogative of God to proportion the rewards of the virtuous and the puniſhments of the wicked, with their reſpective durations, which we find by reaſoning cannot be eternal, and conſequently muſt be temporary; but in what degrees, manner or proportions of intenſeneſs, or of duration, we cannot comprehend, but muſt wait the deciſſion of the righteous judge, whoſe omniſcience takes cognizance of the thoughts, deſigns and actions of his creatures; and whoſe impartial juſtice will hold the balance and extend interchangeable happineſs or miſery to them, according to their reſpective merits or demerits, or the virtues or vices of their minds, in certain temporary periods co-extenſive with our immortality: and though the judgments of God may be vaſtly more ſevere and terrible to incorrigible ſinners beyond the grave, than ſuch as can be inflicted, or conceived of in this life, yet we may by reaſoning from the wiſdom and goodneſs of God and the nature and capacity of the human mind determine, that its happineſs or miſery cannot be perpetual and eternal.

THE moſt weighty arguments deducible from the divine nature have been already offered, *to wit*, the ultimate end of God, in creation and providence, to do the greateſt poſſible good and benignity to being in general, and conſequently, that the great end and deſign of puniſhment, in the divine government, muſt be to reclaim, reſtore, and bring revolters from moral rectitude back to embrace it, and to be ultimately happy; as alſo, that an eternal puniſhment, would defeat the very end and deſign of puniſhment itſelf; and that no good conſequences to the puniſhed could ariſe out of a never ending deſtruction; but that a total, everlaſting, and irreparable evil would take place on ſuch part of the moral creation, as may be thus ſentenced to eternal and remedileſs perdition; which would argue imperfection either in the creation, or moral government of God, or in both.

FURTHERMORE, provided there was, in the nature of things, a liability of eternal deſtruction to any one intelligent being, there muſt conſequently have been the ſame liability in all, or the juſtice and goodneſs of God would not be equal or uniform. But if there could have been, in the nature and fitneſs of things, a poſſibility of perpetually and eternally happifying the moral world, without agency, probation or trial, there can be no diſpute, but that the God of nature would have adopted ſuch a meaſure, and have made it needleſs and impoſſible for us to have ſpeculated on the cauſes of our miſery: and inaſmuch as ſuch a plan has not taken place, we may infer, that it was not poſſible, in the reaſon and fitneſs of things, that it ſhould; and as imperfection opened the door to error and wickedneſs, or to a deviation from moral rectitude; which has actually taken place in the ſyſtem of rational beings, and puniſhment alſo as a neceſſary conſequence of it, it therefore follows, that if eternal puniſhment was poſſible, to any one of the rational creation, it muſt hold equally ſo to the whole, or the divine ſyſtem of fitneſs would be unequal. From which we infer, that though God in his creation and providence, deſigned the ultimate beſt good and felicity of the moral world, he had nevertheleſs ſo far departed from his eternal plan, or intention, that it was liable to be fruſtrated, and that univerſal miſery and eternal damnation was poſſible to overſpread the whole; all this neceſſarily follows on the poſition

tion, that any rational natures are liable to eternal deſtruction; and therefore the doctrine of the poſſibility, or liability, of eternal puniſhment, is inadmiſſible.

FURTHERMORE, accountability, probation or trial, are in nature inſeperably connected with the exiſtence of moral beings, and muſt eternally remain ſo to be, for weakneſs and imperfection is that which ſubjects all finite rational beings to trial and is the only ground of the poſſibility of it. All intelligent agents therefore, except the moſt high God, are probationers. A ſtate of improvement is neceſſarily connected with that of trial and proficiency. What reaſon can be given to make it appear, that the immortal ſouls of mankind, in their ſucceeding ſtate of exiſtence, may not err, and more or leſs deviate from the rules of eternal unerring order and reaſon; they muſt be admitted to be capable of moral action, for it is eſſential to their exiſtence; and though the next ſtate of being may be ever ſo much diſſimilar from this, in the mode or manner of it, yet we ſhall be but creatures in that ſtate, and why not liable to error, tranſgreſſion and blame, and alſo to puniſhment for the ſame; for as finiteneſs or imperfection are the grounds of the liability of our preſent offences, that liability will eternally continue, and that in proportion to our future imperfection. Could God have eſtabliſhed any creature, or race of creatures, in a confirmed and perpetual happineſs, by a ſovereign act of omnipotence, conſiſtent with his moral perfections, and the nature of intelligent agents themſelves, we ſhould have experienced ſuch a confirmation in this life. But a confirmed and perpetual ſtate of bleſſedneſs, will agree to no character ſhort of God's: this is therefore his prerogative, and it is the abſolute perfection of his nature, which confirms him in that ſtate. But as to finite cogitative beings, they cannot in the nature of things, be any more confirmed in happineſs, than they can in moral rectitude, which is the ground and ſource of it; nor is it poſſible for an imperfect nature to attain to perfection, though they may be eternally improving; nor can they be perpetually morally good, for perpetual uniformity is perfection itſelf; but they are always liable to change, to error and ſin, and conſequently to miſery, which is inſeperably connected with it, as the only certain means of repentance, reformation and reſtoration.

Moral good is the only ſource from whence a rational mind can be ſupplied with a happineſs agreeable to the dignity of its nature. It would be impoſſible for omnipotence itſelf to make a vicious mind taſte the ecſtatic felicity of a moral happineſs, ſo long as it may be ſuppoſed to be vicious, inaſmuch as morality, in the nature of the thing itſelf, is prerequiſite to ſuch a happineſs, without the poſſeſſion and actual enjoyment of which the mind cannot be mentally happy, or enjoy itſelf agreeable to its diſcerning, conſcious and ſentimental nature; but muſt diſapprove of the erroneous departure (or its vicious purſuits) from the amiable rules of moral fitneſs, and feel proportionably guilty and miſerable. Nor could pardon or atonement alter the condition of a vicious mind, for miſerable it muſt be, as long as it remains vicious, whether God be ſuppoſed to forgive the wickedneſs of it or not; for it is the conſcious exerciſe of moral goodneſs only, which is capable of happifying the rational mind, therefore ſuch reflections, purſuits and habits, which are compriſed in our agency, as will in their own nature admit of a rational happineſs, make us happy; and ſuch agency of man as is inadequate and improper to conſtitute ſuch happineſs, and which naturally tends to miſery will involve us therein; and miſerable we muſt be, until the bias and diſpoſition of the mind is turned from moral evil to moral good, which is the ſame as repentance and reſtoration. This is the eternal law of nature, reſpecting the agency and the happineſs or miſery of imperfect rational nature, throughout its never ending agency and trial; and conſequently, our eternity, will be as much diverſified with happineſs and miſery, as our agency may be ſuppoſed to alternately partake of moral good and evil. So certain as we retain our rational nature, in our ſucceeding ſtate of exiſtence, we ſhall be capable of moral actions, which admit of proficiency, agency and trial; and not only ſo, but ſubjects us to agency and accountability, as much as in this life, or in any condition of finite reaſon whatever; and every improvement of a rational mind, alters the conſciouſneſs of it, and conſequently the happineſs or the miſery of it. Abſolute power may inflict phyſical evils, but is utterly incapable of inflicting thoſe of a moral nature; nor can mere poſitive injunction by law affect the conſciences of rational beings, who muſt be either happy or miſerable on the baſis of their own agency, and conſciouſneſs of merit or demerit.

It has been owing to improvement that we have progreſſively advanced from the knowledge and capacity of childhood to that of manhood, and to our improvement, which is the ſame as agency, in moral good and evil, that has alternately made us happy or unhappy in a mental ſenſe; from hence we infer, that if rational nature, in the world to come, is eſſentially anologous to what it is in this life, agency and probation will be continued with the immortality of the ſoul, be the manner of its exiſtence, or of its communicating or receiving ideas as it will.

Furthermore, the doctrine of a future improvement, or agency, may be argued from the death of infants and children. None will pretend that they have an opportunity of proficiency in this life, therefore we infer, that if ſuch a ſtate be requiſite to fit and improve their feeble minds for the enjoyment of a rational happineſs, agency muſt be continued to the future ſtate; and admitting that they are immortal, and that agency is precluded from the world to come, they would remain children in knowledge eternally; nor could any departed ſoul, on ſuch a poſition, expand its rational functions beyond its ſize of underſtanding at the time of departing this life: which would make immortality to man a cypher, except as to the perpetuation of their powers of cogitation in a limited circumference; the reflection whereof would be more or leſs rude and incoherent; which at beſt would be but a ſmall fund for an eternal contemplation.

But if it be admitted, that the ſouls of mankind, of every age and denomination, will in their futurity be progreſſive in knowledge, (which muſt be the caſe with cogitative beings) then it neceſſarily follows, that agency and trial proceed hand in hand with it. Therefore it is impoſſible, that there ſhould be a particular day of judgment, in which mankind, or any, or either of them, ſhall receive their eternal ſentence of happineſs or miſery; for ſuch a ſentence is inconſiſtent with any further trial or agency, and therefore is inadmiſſible.

Furthermore, proficiency or agency, is inconſiſtent with a confirmed ſtate of happineſs or of miſery; for in the ſame proportion as our ideas, purſuits, intentions and habits vary, ſo does our happineſs or miſery.

Finite minds cannot be confirmedly happy or miſerable, any more than they can be abſolutely identical which is the prerogative of the divine mind: finite intelligences gain ideas by a ſucceſſion of thinking, and are happy or miſerable in proportion as the ſucceſſion of ideas will admit; and every ſucceſſion in the multiplicity of thinking, is incompatible with a proper identity of mind, (except as to the principle of thinking itſelf) was it to be perfectly identical, it could not admit of a ſucceſſion of ideas, which is the ſame as addition, nor of a dimunition of them, but would be confined to one perception only, and in this caſe, the happineſs or miſery, reſulting from it, would be as identical as the perception itſelf may be ſuppoſed to be, and incapable of enlargement or dimunition; which might be denominated a confirmed ſtate. But a confirmed ſtate is utterly incompatible with a ſtate of improvement, and is applicable to the divine perfection only. Inaſmuch as ſucceſſion of thinking cannot be aſcribed to God, he is therefore identically the ſame, but progreſſive agents, are always capable of additional knowledge, which lays them under additional obligations to moral government, and thus duty is always co-extenſive with the improvement of rational agents; and inaſmuch as agency, proficiency and accountability, are in nature co-exiſtent, or concomitant with intelligent finite beings, we infer, that the doctrine of eternal damnation is without foundation, for that it would, if true, put a final end to any further agency, trial or accountability, therefore, ſo certain as our agency is eternal our condemnation cannot be ſo.

SECTION III.

Human LIBERTY, AGENCY *and* ACCOUNTABILITY, *cannot be attended with* ETERNAL CONSEQUENCES, *either good or evil.*

FROM what has been argued in the foregoing ſection, it appears, that mankind in this life are not agents of trial for eternity, but that they will eternally remain agents of trial. To ſuppoſe that our eternal circumſtances will be unalterably fixed in happineſs or miſery, in conſequence of the agency or tranſactions of this temporary life, is inconſiſtent with the moral government of God, and the progreſſive and retroſpective knowledge of the human mind. God has not put it into our power to plunge ourſelves into eternal woe and perdition; human liberty is not ſo extenſive, for the term of human life bears no proportion to eternity ſucceeding it; ſo that there could be no proportion between a momentary agency, (which is liberty of action,) or probation, and any ſuppoſed eternal conſequences of happineſs or miſery reſulting from it. Our liberty conſiſts in our power of agency, and cannot fall ſhort of, or exceed it, for liberty is agency itſelf; or is that by which agency or action is exerted; it may be, that the curious would define it, that agency is the effect of liberty, and that liberty is the cauſe, which produces it; making a diſtinction between action and the power of action: be it ſo, yet agency cannot ſurpaſs its liberty; to ſuppoſe otherwiſe, would be the ſame as to ſuppoſe agency without the power of agency, or an effect without a cauſe; therefore as our agency does not extend to conſequences of eternal happineſs or miſery, the power of that agency, which is liberty, does not. Sufficient it is for virtuous minds, while in this life, that they keep "*Conſciences void of offence towards God and toward man.*" And that in their commencement in the ſucceeding ſtate, they have a retroſpective knowledge of their agency in this, and retain a conſciouſneſs of a well ſpent life. Beings thus poſſeſſed of a habit of virtue, would enjoy a rational felicity beyond the reach of phyſical evils, which terminate with life; and in all rational probability would be advanced in the order of nature to a more exalted and ſublime manner of being, knowledge and action, than at preſent we can conceive of, where no joys or pains can approach, but of the mental kind; in which elevated ſtate, virtuous minds will be able, in a clearer and more copious manner than in this life, to contemplate the ſuperlative beauties of moral fitneſs; and with extatic ſatisfaction enjoy it, notwithſtanding imperfection and conſequently agency, proficiency and trial, of ſome kind or other, muſt everlaſtingly continue with finite minds.

And as to the vicious, who have violated the laws of reaſon and morality, lived a life of ſin and wickedneſs, and are at as great a remove from a rational happineſs as from moral rectitude; ſuch incorigible ſinners, at their commencing exiſtence in the world of ſpirits, will undoubtedly have opened to them a tremendous ſcene of horror, ſelf-condemnation and guilt, with anguiſh of mind; the more ſo, as no ſenſual delights can there (as in this world) divert the mind from its conſcious guilt; the clear ſenſe of which will be the more pungent, as the mind in that ſtate will be greatly enlarged, and conſequently more capaciouſly ſuſceptible of ſorrow, grief and conſcious woe, from a retroſpective reflection of a wicked life, yet we have reaſon to hope and believe through the wiſdom of the divine government, they may in ſome limited period of duration have a contrition for and deteſtation of ſin and vanity, the procuring cauſe of their puniſhment, and be reclaimed from viciouſneſs and reſtored to virtue and happineſs; but liable to tranſgreſſion, and future miſery, in conſequence of an imperfect nature, eternally ſubjected to agency and trial, and conſequently to alternate happineſs and miſery, which muſt be the caſe with all intelligent probationary beings. But after all our reſearches, the inſufficiency of the human underſtanding, to diſcover the œconomy of the divine government, over the moral world, is ſo great, that we can determine but very little about the manner of its rewards and puniſhments, or of the extent of them; except that they cannot be perpetual or eternal; but on the other hand will be as temporary and interchangeable as the virtue and vice of moral agents. Nevertheleſs, from the arguments which we have deduced from the wiſdom and goodneſs of God in his creation and providence, we may with rational certainty conclude, that moral goodneſs and happineſs will ultimately be victorious over ſin and miſery, which will undoubtedly be more conſpicuouſly ſo in the future ſtages of our immortality; ſo that there will be a far greater plentitude of the former than of the latter; to which the latter finally is made ſubſervient, for otherwiſe we could not account for the wiſdom and goodneſs of God in his creation, providence or moral government.

THE endleſs diſproportion between the cogitations and agency of the human mind, in this momentary life, may, with great propriety, be urged againſt an everlaſting fixedneſs of the condition of happineſs or miſery, after this life is ended;

merely in conſequence of the agency of this. Our conceptions themſelves are progreſſive; we think by ſucceſſion, and our ideas, in their operations, are numerical, and by nature ſubject to number; each individual idea has its circumſcription, and the whole, collectively conſidered, would make but a limited knowledge; and the more inconſiderably ſo, as it is moſt probable, that not one hundredth part of our reflections, from infancy to old age, are worthy to be denominated knowledge; by reaſon of their fictitious and incoherent rudeneſs; ſo that when we contemplate on the endleſsneſs of eternity, our cogitations are loſt in its infinitude; for neither numbers, quantity, admeaſurement, or any poſſible motion, or compariſon of cogitations, or of things, can poſſibly co-extend with it; and conſequently human liberty, or agency and accountability, in their progreſſive exertions, can bear no manner of proportion or connection with an eternity of rewards or puniſhments; for the nature of our liberty, agency and accountability is but finite, and therefore can no otherwiſe operate but by ſucceſſion, and cannot be attended with eternal conſequences, any more than ſucceſſion itſelf can comprize eternity. We may therefore with a well grounded judgment determine, that neither the virtues or vices of human

man life, can be attended with eternal conſequences of good or evil; inaſmuch as ſuch endleſs conſequences, neceſſarily imply an infinite diſproportion between them and human agency: but the truth of the matter is, our liberty, and therefore our accountability, cannot exceed the limits of our cogitations and knowledge; this is the circumference in which our liberty can exerciſe itſelf, and this is the boundary of its agency; and although eternal probation is neceſſarily connected with the eternal exiſtence of finite minds, yet the merits or demerits of an everlaſting probation, has its various operations forever on the mind, exiſting in the conſcience, and cauſing it to be alternately happy or miſerable, in ſuch proportions, and periods, as conformity or nonconformity to moral rectitude, in our eternal probation, will admit.

THE policy of human governments has demanded, that corporeal puniſhments ſhould be inflicted on the violaters of their laws, *to wit*, the whip, the halter, the gibbit, and the like; from theſe and from the ideas of phyſical evils, which are common to us in this life, it ſeems, that moſt of mankind form to themſelves an arrangement of ideas of the manner of God's puniſhing incorrigible ſinners in the world to come. The idea of fire and brimſtone is, in this part of the world, their main apprehenſion, to which they unite the evils of a guilty conſcience, in as much as mental, as well as phyſical evils, with their divers modes of ſufferings, are common to them in this life: but it ſhould be conſidered, that death puts a final end to phyſical evils, except theſe our mortal bodies are to be raiſed and re-united to their reſpective ſouls; which if admitted, they muſt unavoidably ſuffer death a ſecond time, and ſuch as may be ſuppoſed to be caſt into hell-fire (in the vulgar ſenſe) would ſuffer a ſecond diſſolution inſtantly, unleſs their reſurrection bodies are ſuppoſed to be of the ſalamander kind. And thus a phyſical ſuffering, inſtead of being eternal, would be but for a moment, or at moſt but temporary; and if we ſuppoſe thoſe reſurrection bodies will be able to endure fire, it muſt be likewiſe ſuppoſed, that it would be their proper element, and conſequently that they would be happy in it; as ſo intenſe a heat would deſtroy ſuch bodies, whoſe qualities may be ſuppoſed to be oppoſed it.

SECTION IV.

Of PHYSICAL EVILS.

PHYSICAL evils are in nature inſeperable from animal life, they commenced exiſtence with it, and are its concomitants through life; ſo that the ſame nature, which gives being to the one, gives birth to the other alſo; the one is not before or after the other, but they are co-exiſtent together, and cotemporaries; and as they began exiſtence in a neceſſary dependence on each other; ſo they terminate together in death and diſſolution. This is the original order to which animal nature is ſubjected, as applied to every ſpecies of it; the beaſts of the field, the fowls of the air, the fiſh of the ſea with reptiles and all manner of beings which are poſſeſſed of animal life; nor is pain, ſickneſs or mortality any part of God's puniſhment for ſin, on the other hand ſenſual happineſs is no part of the reward of virtue: to reward moral actions with a glaſs of wine or a ſhoulder of mutton, would be as inadequate, as to meaſure a triangle with ſound, for virtue and vice pertain to the mind, and their merits or demerits have their juſt effects on the conſcience, as has been before evinced: but animal gratifications are common to the human race indiſcriminately, and alſo to the beaſts of the field; and phyſical evils as promiſcuouſly and univerſally extend to the whole, ſo that "*There is no knowing good or evil by all that is before us, for all is vanity.*" It was not among the number of poſſibles, that animal life ſhould be exempted from mortality: omnipotence itſelf could not have made it capable of eternalization and indiſſolubility; for the ſelf ſame nature which conſtitutes animal life, ſubjects it to decay and diſſolution; ſo that the one cannot be without the other, any more than there could be a compact number of mountains without vallies, or that I could exiſt and not exiſt at the ſame time, or that God ſhould effect any other contradiction in nature: all contradictions being equally impoſſible, inaſmuch as they imply an abſolute incompatibility with nature and truth; for nature is predicated on truth, and the ſame truth which conſtitutes mountains, made the vallies at the ſame time; nor is it poſſible that they could have a ſeperate exiſtence. And the ſame truth which affirms my exiſtence, denies its negative; ſo alſo the ſame law of nature, which in truth produceth an animal life and ſupports it for a ſeaſon, wears it out, and in its natural courſe reduces it to its original elements again. The vegetable world alſo preſents us with a conſtant aſpect of productions and diſſolutions; and the buſtle of elements is beyond all conception; but the diſſolution of forms is not the diſſolution of matter, or the annihilation of it, or of the creation, which exiſts in all poſſible forms and fluxilities; and it is from ſuch phyſical alterations of the particles of matter, that animal or vegetable life is produced and deſtroyed: elements afford them nutrition, and time brings them to maturity, decay and diſſolution; and in all the prolific production of animal life or the productions of thoſe of a vegetative nature, throughout all their growth, decay and diſſolution, make no addition or diminution of creation; but eternal nature continues its never-ceaſing operations (which in moſt reſpects are myſterious to us) under the unerring guidance of the providence of God.

Animal nature conſiſts of a regular conſtitution of a variety of organic parts, which have a particular and neceſſary dependence on each other, by the mutual aſſiſtance whereof the whole are animated. Blood ſeems to be the ſource of life, and it is requiſite, that it have a proper circulation from the heart to the extreme parts of the body, and from thence to the heart again, that it may repeat its temporary rounds through certain arteries and veins, which repleniſh every minute part with blood and vital heat; but the brain is evidently the ſeat of ſenſation, which through the nervous ſyſtem conveys the animal ſpirits to every part of the body, imparting to it ſenſation and motion, conſtituting it a living machine, which could never have been produced, or exerciſed its reſpective functions in any other ſort of world but this; which is in a conſtant ſeries of fluxilities, and which cauſeth it to produce food for its inhabitants. An unchangeable world could not admit of production or diſſolution, but would be identically the ſame, which would preclude the exiſtence and nutriment of ſuch ſenſitive creatures as we are. The nutrition extracted from food by the ſecret aptitudes of the digeſting powers (by which myſterious operation it becomes incorparated with the circulating juices, ſupplying the animal functions with vital heat, ſtrength and vigour) demands a conſtant flux and reflux of the particles of matter, which is perpetually incorporating with the body, and ſupplying the place of the ſuperfluous particles, that are conſtantly diſcharging themſelves by inſenſible perſpiration; ſupporting, and at the ſame time, in its ultimate tendency, deſtroying animal life. Thus it manifeſtly appears, that the laws of the world in which we live, and the conſtitution of the animal nature of man, are all but one uniform arrangement of cauſes and effects; and as by the courſe of thoſe laws, animal life is propagated and ſuſtained for a ſeaſon, ſo by the operation of the ſame laws, decay and mortality are the neceſſary conſequences.

Chapter IV.

Treating on the IMMORTALITY *of the* HUMAN SOUL.

SECTION I.

Of the APTITUDES *of* SENSATION, *and of their* SUBSERVIENCY *to the* MIND.

HAVING conſidered the providence of God, as it reſpects the mortality of the body, we proceed to the conſideration of the immortality of the ſoul; and in order for a clear underſtanding of this important ſubject, it is requiſite that we firſt ſpeculate on the powers, uſe and end of our external ſenſations, and point out their particular ſubſerviency to the mind; and ſecondly, explain the intrinſic difference between them whereby the latter may exiſt independent of the former: and thirdly, deduce arguments from the neceſſary attributes and moral perfections of God, as alſo from his creation and providence, of the moral certainty of the ſoul's immortality, or natural eternalization. Human nature is compounded of ſenſation and reflection. Senſation comprehends the body with its five ſenſes, *viz.* thoſe of feeling, taſting and ſmelling (the two latter of which are only a diverſity of the modes of feeling) as alſo the more extenſive ſenſes of ſeeing and hearing. Reflection, comprehends the operations of the mind, and is that which is commonly denominated the ſoul, with its various manner of exertions; as that of memory, reaſon, judgment, determination, contrivance, invention, and the like, which will be particularly explained and illuſtrated in its order.

The ſenſes are exquiſitely well calculated to make diſcoveries of external objects to the mind, they are the medium through which the mind receive its firſt notices of things, or mere apprehenſion of them, without denying or affirming any thing concerning them, and it is in, by, or through the inſtrumentality of the ſenſes only, that the mind of man, in this life, is enabled to form any idea of external objects, or to exert its thinking, conſcious nature. The inſtances of perſons born deficient in part, as to their ſenſes, will ſerve to illuſtrate the ſubject matter of our enquiry; thoſe who are born blind, can never be taught what colours are, or what we mean by ſeeing: an idea of colours, or the knowledge of occular perception, is to them ſupernatural and impoſſible; ſo alſo reſpecting thoſe who are born deaf, an idea of ſound would to them be equally ſupernatural; the moſt harmonious muſic would to them be as imperceptible, as nonentity is to us, of which they could not form any conception. This we know to be true in fact.

The ſenſe of feeling, upon which thoſe of taſte and ſmell are erected, or from which they are produced, which (ſtrictly ſpeaking) are only ſo many diverſe modes of feeling, are eſſential to an animal body; without which they could not be denominated animate, but inanimate; but ſeeing and hearing are not eſſential to animation, as it is often deſtitute of thoſe ſenſations; ſo that it is impoſſible in nature, that we ſhould have an inſtance, wherein the mind can poſſibly be ignorant of the idea of feeling, it is nevertheleſs as certain that we are beholden to the ſenſe of feeling for our apprehenſion of it, as to that of ſeeing for our apprehenſion of colours; or to our hearing for the apprehenſion of ſound---In conſequence of palſies and ſuch like diſorders, our ſenſe of feeling has been in part impaired. In ſome inſtances human bodies on one ſide have been ſo benumbed, that on that ſide they have been wholly incapable of feeling ; ſuch inſtances have been common in every age and country of the world ; which together with thoſe other experiments of blindneſs and deafneſs, evinces the dependency of the mind on its ſenſorium, while in this life.

Whatever external object preſents itſelf to the ſenſes, gives the mind an apprehenſion of it. To enumerate the diverſity and multiplicity of the objects of ſenſe would be endleſs, and alſo needleſs. The notices or apprehenſions of things, which are communicated to the mind by the mere aptitude of ſenſation itſelf, abſtracted from a ſucceſſion of reflection, or thinking, are what I denominate ſimple ideas ; which are excited by the intervention of the ſenſes between external objects and the mind, and are much the ſame helps to the mind, as glaſſes are to the ſenſes, by aſſiſting the natural eye to diſcover ſuch object, which without them the eye could not perceive, and the mind by that means obtains an apprehenſion of ſuch extended objects by looking through two mediums, *to wit*, the eye and the glaſs , the eye is in this caſe the firſt medium, without which the mind could not diſcern the glaſs; and the glaſs the ſecond medium, which enables the eye, and conſequently the mind, to diſcover worlds in the expanſion of the heavens, which the mind through its firſt medium only, could not explore. It is on ſimple ideas, which the mind thus mediately obtains through the inſtrumentality of its ſenſes, that all our proficiency in knowledge and ſcience is predicated. There is not one individual apprehenſion or original ſimple idea but what the mind receives through its ſenſory; ſo that ſenſation in the order of nature, diſcloſes the way and manner of the exertions of cogitative nature. Common converſation, learning, buſineſs and whatever pertains to the ſocial life, is manifeſtly dependent on it. Thoſe, who are taught the art of reading and writing, can hold correſpondence with each other though in different quarters of the globe, by which means we are alſo enabled to maintain a correſpondence of ideas with writers who have been long dead; twenty four characters or letters arranged together, according to certain rules preſcribed, are capable of making ſuch an impreſſion on the ſenſe of ſeeing, that by and through that ſenſe, the mind of thoſe who read can underſtand the ideas of thoſe who have written intelligibly. "*It is not by any concomitant act of raci-*

ocination that we come to be apprized of the exiſtence and difference of the common objects of ſenſe; but we find them to be exiſtent and different in and by the pure act of ſenſation itſelf; we have in and by this act ſuch a repreſentation of things made to us, that we apprehend, that this is not that, nor one the other. It is true by reaſon and reflection, we come to a more compleat and particular knowledge of the differences, but we have not our firſt apprehenſions of thoſe differences from thence." Though reaſon and experience, in a variety of inſtances, may correct ſenſe; yet independent of it, there could have been no ſuch thing as reaſoning or experience among mankind, or any ſuch creature as man, ſenſation being a part of his nature. There are many modes and cuſtoms arbitrarily introduced into learning and arts. It was neither ſenſation or reaſon that pointed out any particular ſhape, ſound or name to the twenty-four letters; but it was the effect of contrivance and invention, which are faculties of the mind: nevertheleſs the mind muſt have been previouſly notified, through the medium of its ſenſes, of ſhapes and ſounds in general, or elſe it had not been able to have conceived of, or to have invented ſhapes or ſounds in particular, which might be adapted to anſwer the deſign of communicating or receiving ideas; and thus it is, that ſenſation in all caſes, lays the foundation of the exerciſe of thought and reflection: judgment is no further concerned in ſuch like caſes, than that the figure and ſize of the letters, and their particular ſounds, be uniform and diſtinct, that the characters might be handily written and printed; and any ſuppoſed figure or ſound of letters, which are equally well adapted to the deſign of giving and receiving ideas, and holding intercourſe between intelligent beings, are equally approvable by reaſon, provided they may have obtained common conſent and uſe. The ſame may be obſerved of the rules of ſpelling and many other parts of learning. Language itſelf is abſolutely artificial and arbitrary; for though natural ſenſation taught all nations to apprehend the common objects of ſenſe alike, yet neither ſenſation nor reaſon taught any particular language, and conſequently the nations and tribes of the world differ in their ſpeech, though they agree in their ſenſible apprehenſions of external things; but we arbitrarily affix certain ideas to words or ſounds, and thoſe, who are acquainted with, and underſtand their connection, are linguiſts, and are able to correſpond together.

Words or ſounds have no particular ideas naturally connected with them; common conſent and uſe, in applying certain ideas uniformly to them, is that which furniſhes them with intelligence, (ſome particular ſounds which betoken diſtreſs or gladneſs, excepted,) ſo that in converſation, when certain ſound, which from common uſe have the approbation of any language, and ſuch ſounds with their connective ideas move the ſubtil expanded air, that it vibrates on the drum of the ear, it immediately communicates to the mind the intelligence which by art is connected with ſuch ſounds: ſo when I feel myſelf hungry and faint, I think of food; and when thirſty of drink: I ſmell the fragrancy of a roſe, and my mind forms an idea of that flower; I hear it thunder, and it repreſents to my mind the complex idea of a thunder-ſtorm; I ſee a veſſel, which excites in my mind an idea of its figure; in fine, every of the multiplicity of ſimple ideas, which ever have or can be excited in the mind of man, has been and muſt be communicated by the inſtrumentality of the ſenſes, and are diſtinguiſhed from every of our other ideas by the manner of their perception; which is merely from the pure aptitude of ſenſation itſelf, abſtractly conſidered from reaſoning, collecting or infering one thing from another, and which are common to animal nature in general as well as to the human kind. Simple ideas, of themſelves, conſidered abſtractly from reaſoning, could not comprehend any thing of a moral nature, nor confer any moral obligation; inaſmuch as the knowledge of moral good and evil does not reſult merely from them; both man and beaſt enjoy them promiſcuouſly as they are the productions of animation, and do not pertain to the exalted eſſence of reaſon.

SECTION II.

The intrinſic difference between SENSATION *and the* PRINCIPLE *of the* SOUL, *and of their diſtinct* FUNCTIONS.

THE human mind is capable of underſtanding the moral fitneſs of things in a limited ſenſe. It is capable of reaſoning on ſimple ideas, by compounding them and conſidering them complexly; it is capable of ſeperating and conſidering them abſtractly or complicatedly, and examining into their connection, proportion and other properties, and to make experiments and eſſays on many things, and ſearch into the natural cauſes of things, and diſcover their tendency and ſubſerviency. Our moral notions of things are the reſult of reaſoning on the works of nature and examining into the conſequences of things, thereby diſcerning their ultimate tendency and rational fitneſs, as it affects being in general. But theſe extended parts of ſcientifical knowledge, do not ſo readily come within the circle of our underſtanding as the common notions of morality, which reſpect ſociety in its various relations and connections in life. It is not my deſign to enter into an explanation of theſe ſocial duties, which are evident to mankind in general, but only to obſerve, that though they are ever ſo apparent, yet the knowledge of right and wrong, truth and falſehood, with their reſpective conſequences, are diſcovered by reaſon only, ſenſation being altogether inadequate to ſuch diſcoveries. Invention, contrivance and arts of various kinds, which have contributed to ſubſerve mankind, *ſuch as* the liberal arts, ſciences, mechaniſm, manufactures and the like, are from the exertion of the mind. The diſplay of theſe noble faculties evinces, that there is a principle in the nature of man, ſuperior to any thing which could be the offspring of mere ſenſation.

WHATEVER improvement the mind makes in its reflection, invention and reaſoning, upon ſimple ideas, are the proficiences of intelligence; for ſenſation is one entire and ſimple exertion, which does not admit of improvement; but it is the mind which improves upon thoſe original images. The ideas thus deducible from thoſe which we denominate ſimple, are vaſtly more numerous than thoſe original images themſelves; inaſmuch as they admit of all manner of diverſification and refinement. The ideas of natural things are in their ſeveral kinds, capable of being aſſociated together by the mind, as thoſe pertaining to muſic by themſelves, and thoſe which pertain to military diſcipline, or to any art, ſcience or manufactory, ſhould have their ſeperate aſſemblages; likewiſe ideas pertaining to moral fitneſs are in their nature incapable of aſſociation with mere natural ones; *for inſtance,* juſtice cannot compare with ſound, nor wiſdom with beauty, nor a good conſcience with a good coat, or with any unthinking or unconſcious being. For as ideas of natural things in their reſpective claſſes, are capable of, and naturally aſſociate together by reaſon of their natural fitneſs and utility; ſo ideas of moral fitneſs, naturally aſſociate and connect together. When from a deduction of reaſoning on the works of nature, or from any particular part thereof, we draw an inference of God's goodneſs to man, by reaſoning on the ultimate tendency of the natural world to ſubſerve the moral, we deduce a moral inference from elementary and material things, which is that which we denominate to be the progreſſive act of raciocination; and inaſmuch as in and by the providence of God "*We live, move and have our being,*" as ſome of our "*Own poets have ſaid, for we are alſo his offspring,* the inferences of divine goodneſs would be as numerous as the mind of man could conceive of, nor could but a very ſmall part of the divine benignity be comprehended by our finite underſtandings. The mind being thus able to deduce moral ideas from external things, which we denominate ſimple ideas, is capable of compounding or forming a complex idea of a number of them; can add to or ſubſtract from ſuch complex idea, can form propoſitions, make deductions and final conſequences, and thus proceed in argumentation on moral as well as other ſubjects, to the extent of the mind's capacioufneſs. Was it not for memory, which is a faculty of the ſoul, mankind muſt have remained children in knowledge to this day, inaſmuch as without it they could gain nothing by experience, which on ſuch a poſition would reduce human nature ſo low, that a man would as likely burn his fingers in a candle as a child; as in this caſe, experiments could not be inſtructive, nor could we on this poſition of the debility of memory retain ſo much as one ſimple idea, but that which may be ſuppoſed to be in the preſent tenſe: what we could comprehend for the time being, would comprize the ſum total of our knowledge, for without memory it would be impoſſible for us to argue and infer one thing from another, or to exerciſe reaſon; ſo alſo, if the mind had the exerciſe of memory, but no judgment, it could not draw any conſequences, or come to any concluſion in thoſe things, which may be ſuppoſed to be retained in the memory; ſo that to remember in ſuch circumſtances as this, would be to no purpoſe, nor anſwer any wiſe or valuable end; and to ſuppoſe the mind to have the faculty of memory and judgment, yet, if it had no will or power, to put the reſolutions of the judgment into execution or action, the mind in ſuch a condition would be able to reflect, remember, reaſon and judge of things, but all to no wiſe end, or to ſerve any purpoſe of agency or deſign worthy of a rational creature, being under an invincible confinement and reſtraint, for want of a power to execute the decrees of the judgment: but experience aſſures us that we are free, and that it is through the medium of the ſenſes, that the mind is made apprehenſive of its firſt notices of things, *alias* ſimple ideas; and that is it able to reflect, remember and judge of things, and has a power of willing, or of agency, and in fact is able to exert itſelf in a great variety of actions and conduct. The mind is but one entire, pure or ſimple eſſence; it is the ſame intelligent principle which apprehends ſimple ideas, that retains thoſe perceptions in memory; it is the ſame principle, which reflects and reaſons upon thoſe ideas thus retained in itſelf, that exerts its powers of ratiocination to the extent of the minds capaciouſneſs, and which wills or controuls its own actions. All the different operations, agencies or exertions of the mind, be they what they will, are only the various exertions of the ſame principle; it is therefore the ſame ſoul that receives the perception of external objects or ſimple ideas, which reflects upon them, and which remembers, reaſons and infers one thing from another, draws concluſions, judges and exerts itſelf, actuates the body, and does every thing which belongs to thinking: liberty therefore is eſſential to intelligent beings' notwithſtanding the many metaphyſical arguments which have been advanced to overthrow it.

To point out the exact boundaries between ſenſation and reflection, or the preciſe functions of the one and of the other, and clearly to diſcern where the aptitude of ſenſation ends, and reflection begins, in the apprehenſion of mere ſimple ideas, is curiouſly nice or impoſſible, but it does not follow from hence that there is no diſtinction between them, or, which is the ſame thing, between the body and the mind, any more than that there is no ſuch thing as day and night, becauſe we differ in our opinions often times concerning the diſcovery of the preciſe dawn of day-light, or becauſe we more or leſs are at a loſs to prefix in our minds the exact moment when it becomes viſible, or that there is no diſtinction between truth and falſehood; becauſe that in intricate and perplexed matters, we do not comprehend their reſpective limitations. When the dawn of the day becomes apparent, we clearly diſtinguiſh the day from the night, though we may have been at a loſs about the exact moment when it dawned; and truth and falſehood are diſtinguiſhable by us in plain caſes; ſo alſo concerning ſenſation, and the reflections or mere cogitations of the mind, in the production of ſimple ideas (for none will pretend that the aptitudes of ſenſation extend to rationality,) it may be difficult or impoſſible for us to underſtand the exact proportion, which ſenſation and reflection in the order of nature, have contributed towards the production of thoſe ſimple images, from which all our knowledge of things in general is predicated. We may nevertheleſs for certain, determine that ſenſation is not reflection, but that they are eſſentially and intrinſically different from each other. It is as natural for the mind to reflect, reaſon or phyloſophiſe upon the works of nature, as it is for ſenſation to repreſent to the mind the firſt and ſimple perception of them. All ſorts of ratiocination, contrivance, invention and arts, are intrinſically diſtinct exertions from the aptitude of ſenſation, and pertain to a more exalted principle.

THE terraqueous globe with its productions, is evidently deſigned by the creator to ſubſerve animal life, and the body to ſubſerve the ſoul, or in fine that all matter, variouſly endowed, was made ſubſervient to rational beings; and as ſenſation is the production of matter, it is ſubjected to phyſical evils, which have been conſidered in the fourth ſection of the third chapter.

SENSATION, abſtractedly conſidered from a ſuperior principle, could never have given us any poſſible apprehenſions of the being and providence of God, which could never have been known but by reaſoning from effects to their cauſe: for the eternal cauſe of all things is not corporeal, and therefore cannot come within the notice of our ſenſes, but muſt be ſought out by reaſoning; for it is as much out of the power of ſenſation to make that diſcovery, as it would be out of the power of the mind to form ideas of colours, or ſound, in the inſtances of perſons born blind or deaf. Nor could mere ſenſation have taught us the diſtinction between truth and falſehood, right and wrong, good and evil; to underſtand thoſe diſtinctions would require the exerciſe of reaſon, nor could ſenſation, abſtractly conſidered, give us the leaſt apprehenſion of a ſtate of immortality; for ſenſation terminates at death, and if there was not an intrinſic and eſſential difference between ſoul and body, both would be deſtroyed by death; and for want of making a juſt diſtinction between ſoul and body, ſome have been miſled into an apprehenſion of the gloomy proſpect of an annihilation at death.

SECTION III.

Of the PROVIDENCE *of* GOD, *as it reſpects the important Subject of the* IMMORTALITY *of the* SOUL.

DEATH is rightly called the king of terrors, it is a ſolemn change, and to viſible appearance the deſtruction of the whole man; but it ſhould be conſidered, that it is not at all beyond the power or goodneſs of God, to inveſt the ſoul at the death of the body, with new modes of ſenſation, entirely diverſe from thoſe we are at preſent united to; and which, while we are in this life, we cannot conceive of; provided it be requiſite, in order to our immortality or mode of future exiſtence: but we are ſo imperfect with reſpect to our ſpeculations on the manner of exiſtence of unembodied ſouls, that we know not whether it will be neceſſary or requiſite, that departed ſouls ſhould be united to any ſort of ſenſorium at all, when they are ſeperated from the body by death; they may, for what we know, be ſuited without any ſenſitive vehicle to their immortal ſtate, and manner of exiſtence, in the ſame predicament, which their diſunion from the body may unfold to them. All poſſible power and goodneſs belongs to God, ſo that there can be no rational doubt or diſbelief, but that the God who made us, has conſtituted our ſouls, ſo that they will ſurvive their bodies, and exiſt in ſuch a manner, as is of all others the beſt for them, (conſiſtent with that of the ſcale of being in general) and moſt worthy of the perfection of God; although at preſent he has not ſeen fit to indulge us with the knowledge of it. The providence of God has been abundantly and conſpicuouſly diſplayed towards us in this life, on which we may with great aſſurance, predicate our darling and important hope of immortality. Ungrateful and fooliſh it muſt be for rational beings in the poſſeſſion of exiſtence, and ſurrounded with a kind and almighty providence, to diſtruſt the author thereof concerning their futurity, becauſe they cannot comprehend the mode or manner of their ſucceeding and progreſſive exiſtence:

When we conſider the eternity and infinity of God, and of his creation and providence, and that his ultimate deſign in the whole, muſt have been to exalt and happify the moral world, that human life is but a preſage and pre-requiſite exiſtence for an introduction into another more dignified in the order of being: thoſe vain and idle diſtruſts of our immortality will vaniſh, and our minds will be eſtabliſhed in a firm reliance on God, that in the order of nature and courſe of his providence, (however inconceiveable to us) he has ſecured our immortality. It is in vain for us, while in this life, to expect to underſtand the manner of our future exiſtence, or how mental beings (devoid of ſenſitive vehicles, or of ſuch ſort of ſenſations as ours) exert thought and reflection on new ſubjects in a new world, or how they interchangeably communicate intelligence to one another. Theſe matters cannot be known to us, ſo long as we are dependent on our preſent ſenſes for the predication of our knowledge; for our preſent organized ſenſations are inadequate to ſuch diſcoveries; they were calculated for this world only, in which they admirably well anſwer their deſign, uſe and end, but are unequal to the taſk of giving our minds any images or repreſentations of things beyond the grave, their common repoſitory.

Inconsiderate it is for mankind to object againſt the doctrine of immortality, becauſe they cannot conceive of ſuch a ſtate, or how it will be, (neither do I pretend to communicate the knowledge of the manner of it) this is deducing an objection, not from reaſon or argument, but from mere ignorance. I ſhall therefore proceed to collect rational arguments, from the perfections, creation and providence of God, and particularly from the intrinſic nature of the ſoul, to evince its immortality. But objecters to this doctrine demand ſenſible or occular demonſtrations for it, which cannot be had, "*For eye hath not ſeen, nor ear heard, nor hath it entered into the*" mind "*of man to conceive*" an idea of the manner of it. A man born blind might with the ſame propriety, or rather impropriety, object againſt the reality of colours or of ſight, (and pledge his ignorance for the proof of it, as the predicate of his objection,) as we may object againſt the doctrine of immortality, becauſe we cannot in this life, and thro' the medium of our ſenſorium, apprehend the manner of our ſucceeding exiſtence; the reality of which depends not on the weakneſs of our reaſonings, or the inadequateneſs or impropriety of our preſent ſenſations, to diſcover the ſtate, condition, or manner of it; but it depends altogether on God, and on his eternalizing the nature of cogitative and underſtanding beings, or not. While we are in this life we ſhould adore God, and with gratitude confide in the ultimate goodneſs of his providence to diſcloſe to our minds the myſterious objects and manner of the world to come at death, for then, and not till then, ſhall we need that knowledge. Undoubtedly our creator wiſely limited the objects of our perception to the world wherein we live, and reſtricted our ſimple ideas to the objects of ſenſe, from which we are neceſſitated to ſuperſtruct all our knowledge of things in general. Thus it is, that our creator in the order of the ſucceſſion of cauſes has made uſe of thoſe mere ſimple images of external things, to diſcloſe to our underſtanding, whatever he ſees fit to gratify us with the knowledge or perception of, while in this life; therefore all our knowledge of things univerſally, while in this life, muſt be deduced from the preſent order of human nature, and the world in which we are citizens, from which we attempt to illuſtrate the doctrine of immortality.

IDEAS once taken or conceived by the mind through the medium of its ſenſes, and retained in memory, are capable of being reviewed, reviſed, corrected, improved, and diverſified in all poſſible methods of thinking and argumentation, although the external objects, which excited thoſe ſimple images from whence thoſe argumentative arrangements originated, may have been abſent for a ſucceſſion of years; for inſtance, I may have retained the ideas or arguments of an author, whom I had read twenty years ago, though I may not have read the book, or heard of it ſince; ſo I may retain a remembrance of ſounds, which I heard as long ſince, and be able to make new obſervations or argumentations thereon; ſo likewiſe in inſtances wherein perſons have been deprived, or have loſt their ſenſes of ſeeing or hearing, or both, yet the mind having once received ſimple ideas through thoſe ſenſes, in the time of their uſefulneſs, is able to reflect and reaſon on thoſe original images, the ſame as though it had never been deprived of thoſe ſenſations, but could never, after the deprivation of its ſenſes of ſeeing or hearing, receive any new ſimple ideas of either ſeeing or hearing in conſequence of the loſs of them, but would be reſtricted to thoſe ſimple images of ſeeing or hearing, which were apprehended by the mind, previous to its loſs of thoſe ſenſes for its new and progreſſive compoſitions, or modifications of thoſe original ſimple ideas, and retain the knowledge and conſciouſneſs of the ſtate of things made perceptible to them through the medium of thoſe ſenſes of ſeeing and hearing, for ever after the loſs of them, or at leaſt during the period of life; which we know to be true in fact. From all which we may with great propriety infer, that the human ſoul admitting it a ſeperate ſtate of exiſtence, muſt neceſſarily retain a remembrance or conſciouſneſs of this world, and of its agency or conduct in it, though the body, *the inſtrument of ſenſation*, (through which medium the ſoul, during the period of life, was enabled to apprehend its ſimple ideas,) be totally deſtroyed by death.

Admitting that the ſoul ſurvives death, and is by nature immortal; and alſo that the mode of its exiſtance is different from this world, and its manner of exiſtence and converſe in it; and that death is a releaſe from carnallity and phyſical evil, and raiſe departed ſpirits to a ſuperior rank or condition in the order of being, to their ſurvivers in life; it will follow of neceſſary conſequence, that thoſe, who are ſurvivors, could form no manner of conception of ſuch an elevated kind of exiſtence, as it would be ſupernatural to human conception in this compounded nature, conſiſting of ſenſation and reflection.

To suppose, while we are in this ſtate, we would retain a repreſentation or underſtanding of the manner of that which is beyond death, would be the ſame as to ſuppoſe that both ſtates are alike; and that after death we ſhall exiſt in the ſame manner as we do here; and thus inadvertently (ideally) carry our mortality with us into the next ſtate, and conceive of acting over much the ſame ſcene as at preſent, which mode of exiſtance would be obnoxious to a ſecond death, and is incompatible with our darling hope of immortality: therefore as certain as our ſouls are immortal, the manner of our immortality, cannot be underſtood by us in this life. Was it poſſible for us in this life to break in upon the order of being, and perceive and underſtand the felicities and glorious manner of exiſtence in the world to come, it could not fail to imbitter all our preſent enjoyments, and make us diſcontented and miſerable from the anticipation of a felicity beyond our condition in the order of being, and wholly diſqualify us to act and conduct in our ſeveral ſtations and relations in the preſent life: from hence we may learn the wiſdom and goodneſs of God, in concealing from us, in this ſtate, the extatic bleſſedneſs which virtuous ſouls will be qualified for, and be admitted to partake of in the next.

It is not rational to expect that any new law of nature will take place upon our commencing exiſtence in a future ſtate; though the manner of that ſtate, and of our exiſtence in it, will be new to us; inaſmuch as the eternal order of nature has not as yet brought us into thoſe future circumſtances, and as our firſt perceptions of things in this world are new to us, ſo in the ſame ſenſe, the manner of our future ſtate, and of our exiſtence in it, will be new; there will be an entire change of the mode of our perception, and likewiſe in the objects of our perception, but the identity of our ſouls never can be changed; for the principle of the mind of A, and its individual conſciouſneſs, can never be the individual or identical principle of the mind and conſciouſneſs of B; the ſame will hold equally true with reſpect to all rational beings; for that there are as many individual ſouls, as there are ſeperate or diſtinct cogitative principles or eſſences.

Were we to admit that two individual and diſtinct minds were conſcious of the ſame conſciouſneſs (except as to their individuality of eſſence, which is not poſſible) they would not be, in conſequence thereof, the ſame mind, any more than as though their whole conſciouſneſſes were diſſimilar; for likeneſs is not ſameneſs, any more than unlikeneſs is ſo; but reaſon and conſciouſneſs will eternally remain the ſame, as to nature and kind, in all poſſible modes of exiſtence; tho' the manner of perception, or the objects of it, may be liable to inconceiveable alterations and diverſity; notwithſtanding thinking beings are eſſentially the ſame: For if they reflect and reaſon, they are conſcious they do ſo, be they in what ſtate or manner of exiſtence they will; or be the objects of reflection and conſciouſneſs what they will. Our preſent five ſenſes are diverſe in their manner of communicating the notices of external objects to the mind; ſo that in this life we experience the advantage of a diverſity in the mode of ſenſation, as ſeeing is not hearing. We may from hence infer the poſſibility of our minds forming ideas in the ſucceeding ſtate of being, through ſuch a medium, as at preſent we can have no manner of conception of; for reaſoning, which is eſſential to the exerciſe of a rational ſoul, is but a ſucceſſion of thinking, and comparing ideas together, and drawing concluſions from certain premiſes, previouſly laid down in the mind; nor is the manner or the objects of perception, particularly eſſential to reaſoning; for if ſo be the mind has an apprehenſion of things, it can reaſon thereon, be the manner of thoſe apprehenſions as it will, or in what world it will; for as it is not eſſential to mere creation to occupy any particular form, tho' it muſt exiſt in ſome form or other, ſo any particular mode of exiſtence or apprehenſion is not eſſential to the ſoul, though it muſt likewiſe exiſt in ſome ſtate or other, and be ſupplied with ſome ſort of apprehenſion or other, on which it may predicate its reaſonings, and ſuperſtruct its knowledge and happineſs.

From the foregoing diſcourſe, it does not appear any ways contradictory to the order of nature, as far as we are acquainted with it, that our ſouls may ſurvive our bodies, and that they are by nature immortal and capable of exiſting in a mode and manner very different from this world; and our manner of exiſtence and converſation in it, and which at preſent we can form no right conception of; and that in our premiſed and progreſſive ſtate, or condition of being and action, we may retain a remembrance, and conſequently a conſciouſneſs, that we are the ſame individual intelligent beings, who inhabited and actuated our reſpective bodies, while in this life; and alſo retain a memory and conſciouſneſs of our manner of exiſtence, and of our deportment or agency in moral good and evil; For if this is not the caſe, our reſpective proficiencies in moral good and evil in this ſtage of action, cannot be attended with conſequences of conſcious mental happineſs or miſery, in our commencing a premiſed ſucceeding exiſtence. For that to be intelligently or mentally happy or miſerable without a conſciouſneſs of it is contradictory and impoſſible. So that provided in our progreſſive ſtate of being and action, we are not conſcious of what we have done and tranſacted in this world, God in his order of nature (which is the ſame as his providence) could not reward or puniſh mankind, in a future ſtate, for their virtuous or vicious agencies in this; which would be incompatible with the divine adminiſtration of juſtice and goodneſs.

WE muſt therefore admit, that if our ſouls have a future exiſtence, we muſt then have a conſciouſneſs, not only of our identity of being, but alſo of our demeanour in this life; and thus by a retroſpective conſciouſneſs, begin a condition of mental felicity, or mental pungent woe, according to our works; which an awakened conſcience, and the juſtice of God will diſcloſe, at that important and dreadful criſis of our unbodied and incomprehenſible exiſtence.

ANIMAL nature, as has been before obſerved, conſiſts of a regular conſtitution of a variety of organic parts, every of which has a neceſſary dependence on each other. Blood is the ſource of life, and in order to preſerve the machine, and perpetuate its functions, it is requiſite that it ſhould have a due circulation from the heart to the ſurface of the body, to repleniſh it with homogeneous particles, vital heat and vigour; and that it ſhould have a retrograde motion from thence to the heart that it may repeat its temporary rounds; certain arteries and veins have been wiſely conſtructed for that purpoſe. But the brain is evidently the ſeat of ſenſation, which through the nerves conveys the animal ſpirits to every part of the body, qualifying it with ſenſation and elaſtic motion, which is of an exquiſite, ſubtil, ethereal and electrical quality, and almoſt (and ſome ſay quite) inſtantaneous in its operation, in which the mind takes its reſidence in this life. This ſenſorium, through which we form ideas of external objects, can form no conception of other minds, or of mere mental beings, except by the application of their external ſenſations to ours, or by language either oral or written, of which we underſtand the ſigns; nor can our groſs ſenſations repreſent the perception of our own minds to ourſelves. The knowledge therefore of our cogitative nature is not compounded of ſimple ideas, which are deduced mediately from material beings; but the knowledge which mental beings have of their own exiſtence is from their conſciouſneſs of being, reflection, and ratiocination, together with other mental exertions; which are inviſible, as well to our own ſenſations as to our neighbour's; inaſmuch as intellectual beings are imperceptible to the aptitudes of ſenſation; for they are neither long or ſhort; round or ſquare; black or white; nor do they occupy ſpace as material beings do; or conſiſt of ſuch a quality, on which our ſenſations can operate; but, as has been obſerved, the mind is conſcious of itſelf, and of its own agency, though it could not have had any apprehenſion of external objects independent of ſenſation. As ſenſation is compounded of matter, its aptitudes are reſtricted to material exiſtences; and therefore can make no diſcoveries of mere cogitative beings, whether that of our own ſouls, or of the ſouls of others: for our own minds, are as inviſible to our own ſenſations, as that of a pure angel may be ſuppoſed to be; which I preſume will be conceded to by the contemplative, who examine into matters of fact collectable from their own experience.

That our minds reflect, remember, reaſon and judge of things, and are able to reconſider them, and make refinements and proficiencies upon their own reaſonings, is a fact which every day's experience will confirm. The ſoul has a power, not only to exert its mental faculties, but to actuate its organized body into ſpontaneous motion, to anſwer the purpoſes of wiſdom, contrivance and deſign; which are effects too ſtupendous to ariſe out of mere matter, figure and motion, with their effects and combinations; and which muſt therefore be aſcribed to a ſuperior principle, that is intrinſically diſtinct from matter, and which may continue to exiſt when the body is deſtroyed by death, and is no longer a ſuitable habitation or recepticle for it.

The body itſelf, notwithſtanding its fluctuating and periſhable nature, does not preſent us with any idea of annihilation; its final diſſolution and return to its original elements again, is no more than a diſſolution of the form, and conſtruction of the particles, with their coheſive and animal aptitudes and combinations, and by no means a diſſolution or annihilation of matter: for no particular form is eſſential to the exiſtence of matter, though it is eſſential to the exiſtence of animal life; but mere matter does exiſt in all poſſible forms and fluxilities.

And as in nature there is no annihilation of matter, as ſuch, it is a ſtrong argument in favor of the immortality of rational beings; inaſmuch as they are not liable to ſuch phyſical changes, as animal bodies are obnoxious to. Thought and reflection, memory and judgment, invention and deſign, derive not their eſſence from the maſs of incogitative elements, but are in their own nature immortal; for that which is immaterial is exempted from phyſical evils, and inaſmuch as matter univerſally, was created and variouſly endowed, tempered and qualified, regulated and governed, (more eſpecially ſuch a part as compoſes human bodies,) wholly to ſubſerve thinking and rational beings; (as has been in the preceeding diſcourſe fully evinced) and inaſmuch as the ultimate end of creation, and the principle deſign of providence, muſt have been to ſubſerve the moral world, by diſplaying the wiſdom, power and goodneſs of God to cogitative and underſtanding beings, we may be morally certain, that in the order of nature, and courſe of God's providence, he has ſecured to us a never ending exiſtence, and that mind as well as matter will be eternal; for human life, abſtractly conſidered from the reality of immortality, would hardly be deſired by the generality of mankind, could they have but a clear underſtanding of the phyſical evils of it, and alſo of the oppreſſions, abuſes and injuſtice, which is "*Done under the Sun.*" From the conſideration whereof the reputed wiſe man, "*Praiſed the dead more than the living, which are yet alive*" Should we admit that death extinguiſheth the being of man, what narrow and contracted notions muſt we conſequently entertain of God and of his creation?

We ſhould be neceſſitated to deduce an inference of injuſtice againſt his providence, from the unequal diſtribution of juſtice in this life, which, on a ſuppoſition of a future ſtate of being, may be remedied. As true as mankind now exiſt, and are endowed with reaſon and underſtanding, and have the power of agency and proficiency in moral good and evil, ſo true it is, that they muſt be ultimately rewarded, or puniſhed, according to their reſpective merits or demerits; and it is as true, as this world exiſts, and rational and accountable beings inhabit it, that the diſtribution of juſtice therein is partial, unequal and uncertain, and conſequently it is as true, as that there is a God, that there muſt be a future ſtate of exiſtence, in which the diſorder, injuſtice, oppreſſion and viciouſneſs, which are acted and tranſacted by mankind in this life, ſhall be righteouſly adjuſted, and the delinquents ſuitably puniſhed; and that the virtuous who obey the laws of reaſon or moral fitneſs, which are the laws of God, ſhall receive a juſt and rational enjoyment of happineſs, according to their works: for God may as well ceaſe to be, as ceaſe to be ultimately juſt.

THE natural hope and ſtrong expectation of immortality, which mankind in all ages, countries, and nations, have entertained, is a preſage and earneſt of that eternal inheritance; for it could not be from the invention and tradition of man, in as much as it has taken place among every of the traditions and ſectaries in the world, except the Sadducees (who rejected it, becauſe it was not to be met with in the theology of Moſes, their lawgiver, who, they ſuppoſed, was immediately dictated by God and could not have failed of promulgating the doctrine of immortality, had it been in fact true:) but none of the human race, who have not been prepoſſeſſed by traditions to the contrary, have failed of hoping and believing in the reality of a future exiſtence, the barbarous and uncultivated nations of the earth not excepted, and inaſmuch as this expectation hath made ſuch deep and univerſal impreſſion on the human mind, we muſt conclude it to be the voice of nature powerfully and univerſally evincing the immortality of man;

Admitting that it was in the power of God to have imparted the quality or nature of endleſs exiſtence to cogitative and underſtanding beings, we may be morally certain, that human ſouls are by nature thus eternalized, for otherwiſe it would follow, that God had not done that, for the immortality, and conſequently the bleſſedneſs of man, which he might have done for them, but that inſtead of making them immortal, he had made them mere periſhable and worthleſs animals, and deluded them with vain and empty hopes and ſtrong expectations of ſurviving the grave, to no purpoſe, except, to impoſe on them by fruſtrating the natural hope of immortality, by the ſtroke of death which he had originally implanted in them. But as there can be no diſpute concerning the perfection of power in God, to eternize mental, cogitative and underſtanding beings, ſo there can be no diſpute, but that his perfection of goodneſs, has induced him in his order of providence, to accompliſh ſo great, benevolent and God-like a work, to his eternal glory, and the everlaſting beſt good, of a whole world of intelligent rational beings.

Wherefore let us perſevere in the practice of virtue, habitually conforming ourſelves to the moral rectitude of things, and wait patiently the few days, that God ſees fit to continue us in this life, remembering, that at death, the myſterious ſtate of immortality will be unfolded unto us, and that until then, it will be beſt for us not to underſtand the ſuperior manner and extatic felicities thereof. Sufficient it is for us at preſent, for the encouragement of morality, that we believe, from the higheſt moral certainty, that there is ſuch a ſtate, leaving it to the God who made us, to unfold the manner of it, at ſuch time as his order of nature ſhall bring us into the fruition of it,

Chapter

Chapter V.

SECTION I.

Speculations on the DOCTRINE *of the Depravity of* HUMAN REASON.

IN the courſe of our ſpeculations on divine providence we proceed next to the conſideration of the doctrine of the depravity of human reaſon; a doctrine derogatory to the nature of man, and the rank and character of being which he holds in the univerſe, and which, if admitted to be true, overturns knowledge and ſcience and renders learning, inſtruction and books uſeleſs and impertinent; inaſmuch as reaſon, depraved or ſpoiled, would ceaſe to be reaſon; as much as the mind of a raving madman would of courſe ceaſe to be rational: admitting the depravity of reaſon, the conſequence would unavoidably follow, that as far as it may be ſuppoſed to have taken place in the minds of mankind, they could be no judges of it, in conſequence of their ſuppoſed depravity; for without the exerciſe of reaſon, we could not underſtand what reaſon is, which would be neceſſary for us previouſly to underſtand, in order to underſtand what it is not; or to diſtinguiſh it from that which is its reverſe. But for us to have the knowledge of what reaſon is, and the ability to diſtinguiſh it from that which is depraved, or is irrational, is incompatible with the doctrine of the depravity of our reaſon. Inaſmuch as to underſtand what reaſon is, and to diſtinguiſh it from that which is marred or ſpoiled, is the ſame to all intents and purpoſes, as to have, exerciſe and enjoy, the principle of reaſon itſelf, which precludes its ſuppoſed depravity: ſo that it is impoſſible for us to underſtand what reaſon is, and at the ſame time determine that our reaſon is depraved; for this would be the ſame as when we know that we are in poſſeſſion and exerciſe of reaſon, to determine that we are not in poſſeſſion or exerciſe of it.

It may be, that ſome, who embrace the doctrine of the depravity of human reaſon, will not admit, that it is wholly and totally depraved, but that it is in a great meaſure marred or ſpoiled. But the foregoing arguments are equally applicable to a ſuppoſed depravity in part, as in the whole; for in order to judge whether reaſon be depraved in part, or not, it would be requiſite to have an underſtanding, of what reaſon may be ſuppoſed to have been, previous to its premiſed depravity; and to have ſuch a knowledge of it, would be the ſame as to exerciſe and enjoy it in its luſtre and purity; which would preclude the notion of a depravity in part, as well as in the whole; for it would be utterly impoſſible for us to judge of reaſon undepraved and depraved, but by comparing them together. But for depraved reaſon to make ſuch a compariſon, is contradictory and impoſſible; ſo that, if our reaſon had been depraved, we could not have had any conception of it any more than a beaſt. Men of ſmall faculties in reaſoning cannot comprehend the extenſive reaſonings of their ſuperiors, how then can a ſuppoſed depraved reaſon, comprehend that reaſon which is uncorrupted and pure? to ſuppoſe that it could, is the ſame as to ſuppoſe that depraved and undepraved reaſon is alike, and if ſo there needs no further diſpute about it.

THERE is a manifeſt contradiction in applying the term *depraved*, to that of reaſon, the ideas contained in their reſpective difinitions will not admit of their aſſociation together, as the terms convey heterogeneous ideas; for reaſon ſpoiled, marred, or robbed of its perfection, ceaſeth to be rational, and ſhould not be called reaſon; inaſmuch as it is premiſed to be depraved, or degenerated from a rational nature; and in conſequence of the deprivation of its nature, ſhould alſo be deprived of its name, and called ſubterfuge, or ſome ſuch-like name, which might better define its real character.

Those who invalidate reaſon, ought ſeriouſly to conſider, "*Whether they argue againſt reaſon with or without reaſon; if with reaſon, then they eſtabliſh the principle, that they are labouring to dethrone*:" but if they argue without reaſon, (which, in order to be conſiſtent with themſelves, they muſt do) they are out of the reach of rational conviction, nor do they deſerve a rational argument.

We are told that the knowledge of the depravity of reaſon, was firſt communicated to mankind by the immediate inſpiration of God. But inaſmuch as reaſon is ſuppoſed to be depraved, what principle could there be in the human irrational ſoul, which could receive or underſtand the inſpiration, or on which it could operate, ſo as to repreſent, to thoſe whom it may be ſuppoſed were inſpired, the knowledge of the depravity of (their own and mankind's) reaſon (in general:) For a rational inſpiration muſt conſiſt of rational ideas; which pre-ſuppoſes, that the minds of thoſe who were inſpired, were rational, previous to ſuch their inſpiration; which would be a downright contradiction to the inſpiration itſelf; the import of which was to teach the knowledge of the depravity of human reaſon, which without reaſon could not be underſtood, and with reaſon it would be underſtood, that the inſpiration was falſe.

Will any advocates for the depravity of reaſon ſuppoſe, that inſpiration ingrafts or ſuperadds the eſſence of reaſon itſelf, to the human mind? admitting it to be ſo, yet ſuch inſpired perſons could not underſtand any thing of reaſon, before the reception of ſuch ſuppoſed inſpiration; nor would ſuch a premiſed inſpiration, prove to its poſſeſſors, or receivers, that their reaſon had ever been depraved. All that ſuch premiſed inſpired perſons could underſtand, or be conſcious of, reſpecting reaſon, would be after the inſpiration may be ſuppoſed to have taken effect, and made them rational beings, and then inſtead of being taught by inſpiration, that their reaſon had been previouſly depraved, they could have had no manner of conſciouſneſs of the exiſtence or exerciſe of it, 'till the imparting the principle of it by the ſuppoſed energy of inſpiration; nor could ſuch ſuppoſed inſpired perſons communicate the knowledge of ſuch a premiſed revelation to others of the ſpecies, who for want of a rational nature, could not be ſuppoſed, *on this poſition*, to be able to receive the impreſſions of reaſon.

THAT there are degrees in the knowledge of rational beings, and alſo in their capacities to acquire it, cannot be diſputed, as it is ſo very obvious among mankind. But in all the retroſpect gradations from the exalted reaſonings of a Locke or a Newton, down to the loweſt exerciſe of it among the ſpecies, ſtill it is reaſon, and not depraved; for a leſs degree of reaſon by no means implies a depravity of it, nor does the imparing of reaſon argue its depravity, for what remains of reaſon, or rather of the exerciſe of it, is reaſon ſtill. But there is not, and cannot be ſuch a thing as depraved reaſon, for that which is rational is ſo, and for that reaſon cannot be depraved, whatever its degree of exerciſe may be ſuppoſed to be.

A BLOW on the head, or fracture of the perecranium, as alſo palſies and many other caſualties that await our ſenſorium; retard, and in ſome caſes wholly prevent the exerciſe of reaſon, for a longer, or ſhorter period; and ſometimes through the ſtage of human life; but in ſuch inſtances as theſe, reaſon is not depraved, but ceaſes in a greater or leſs degree, or perhaps wholly ceaſes its rational exertions or operations; by reaſon of the breaches, or diſorders of the organs of ſenſe, but in ſuch inſtances, wherein the organs become rectified, and the ſenſes recover their uſefulneſs, the exerciſe of reaſon returns; free from any blemiſh or depravity. For the ceſſation of the exerciſe of reaſon, by no means depraves it.

THERE is in God's infinite plentitude of creation and providence, ſuch an infinite diſplay of reaſon, that the moſt exalted finite rational beings, fall infinitely ſhort of the comprehenſion thereof. For though the moſt inconſiderable rational beings, who can diſcern any truth at all, bear a reſemblance or likeneſs to God, as well as every rational nature of whatever degree in the ſcale of being, yet neither the greateſt or leaſt of them can bear any manner of proportion to God; inaſmuch as no poſſible degree of reaſon or knowledge, can bear any proportion to that reaſon and knowledge, which is eternal and infinite, as has been before argued. And though human reaſon cannot underſtand every thing, yet in ſuch things, which it does underſtand, its knowledge which is acquired by reaſoning, is as true and certain, as the divine knowledge may be ſuppoſed to be: for to more than underſtand a thing, ſpeaking of that particular, is impoſſible even to omniſcience itſelf. For knowledge is but knowledge, and that only whether it is in the divine mind, or ours, or in any other intelligencies; therefore knowledge is not imperfect; for a knowledge of any thing is the ſame as to have right ideas of it, or ideas according to truth, and as all knowledge of things in general muſt be predicated on truth, it will agree in the divine or human mind.

From what has been argued on this ſubject, in this and the preceeding chapters, it appears, that reaſon is not, and cannot be depraved, but that it bears a likeneſs to divine reaſon, is of the ſame kind, and in its own nature as uniform as truth, which is the teſt of it; though in the divine eſſence, it is eternal and infinite, but in man it is eternal only, as it reſpects their immortality, and finite, as it reſpects capaciouſneſs. Such people, as can be prevailed upon to believe, that their reaſon is depraved, may eaſily be led by the noſe, and duped into ſuperſtition at the pleaſure of thoſe, in whom they confide, and there remain from generation to generation: for when they throw by the law of reaſon, *the only one* which God gave them to direct them in their ſpeculations and duty, they are expoſed to ignorant or inſiduous teachers, and alſo to their own irregular paſſions, and to the folly and enthuſiaſm of thoſe about them, which nothing but reaſon can prevent or reſtrain: Nor is it a rational ſuppoſition that the commonality of mankind would ever have miſtruſted, that their reaſon was depraved, had they not been told ſo, and it is whiſpered about, that the firſt inſinuation of it was from the Prieſts; (though the Arminian Clergymen in the circle of my acquaintance have exploded the doctrine.) Should we admit the depravity of reaſon, it would equally affect the prieſthood, or any other teachers of that doctrine, with the reſt of mankind; but for depraved creatures to receive and give credit to a depraved doctrine, ſtarted and taught by depraved creatures, is the greateſt weakneſs and folly imaginable, and comes nearer a proof of the doctrine of a total depravity, than any arguments which have ever been advanced in ſupport of it.

SECTION II.

Containing a Diſquiſition of the LAW *of* NATURE, *as it reſpects the* MORAL SYSTEM, *interſperſed with* OBSERVATIONS *on ſubſequent* RELIGIONS.

THAT mankind are by nature endowed with ſenſation and reflection, from which reſults the powers of reaſon and underſtanding, will not be diſputed. The ſenſes are well calculated to make diſcoveries of external objects, and to communicate thoſe notices, or ſimple images of things to the mind, with all the magnificent ſimplicity of nature, which opens an extenſive field of contemplation to the underſtanding, enabling the mind to examine into the natural cauſes and conſequences of things, and to inveſtigate the knowledge of moral good and evil, from which, together with the power of agency, reſults the human conſcience. This is the original of moral obligation and accountability, which is called natural religion; for without the underſtanding of truth from falſehood, and right from wrong, which is the ſame as juſtice from injuſtice, and a liberty of agency, which is the ſame as a power of proficiency in either moral good or evil; mankind would not be rational or accountable creatures. Undoubtedly it was the ultimate deſign of our creator, in giving us being, and furniſhing us with thoſe noble compoſitions of mental powers and ſenſitive aptitudes, that we ſhould, in, by, and with that nature, ſerve and honor him: and with thoſe united capacities ſearch out and underſtand our duty to him, and to one another, with the ability of practiſing the ſame, as far as may be neceſſary for us, in this life. To object againſt the ſufficiency of natural religion, to effect the ultimate beſt good of mankind, would be derogating from the wiſdom, juſtice and goodneſs of God, who in the courſe of his providence to us has adopted it: beſides, if natural religion may be ſuppoſed to be deficient, what ſecurity can we have that any ſubſequent revealed religion ſhould not be ſo alſo? For why might not a ſecond religion from God, be as inſufficient or defective as a firſt religion from him may be ſuppoſed to be? From hence we infer, that if natural religion is inſufficient to dictate mankind in the way of their duty, and make them ultimately happy, there is an end to religion in general. But as certain as God is perfect, in wiſdom and goodneſs, natural religion is ſufficient and complete; and having had the divine approbation, and naturally reſulting from a rational nature, is as univerſally promulgated to mankind as reaſon itſelf. But to the diſadvantage of the claim of all ſubſequent religions, *called revelations, whether denominated* *inſpired*, *external*, *ſupernatural*, *or what not*, they came too late into the world to be eſſential to the well being of mankind, or to point out to them the only way to heaven and everlaſting bleſſedneſs: Inaſmuch as far the greateſt part of mankind, who have ever lived in this world, had departed this life previous to the æras and promulgations of ſuch revelations. Beſides, thoſe ſubſequent revelations to the law of nature, began the ſame as human traditions have ever done, in very ſmall circumferences, in the reſpective parts of the world where they have been inculcated, and made their progreſs as time, chance and opportunity preſented. Does this look like the contrivance of heaven and the only way of ſalvation? or is it not more like this world and the device of man? Undoubtedly the great parent of mankind laid a juſt and ſufficient foundation of ſalvation for every of them, for otherwiſe ſuch of them, who may be ſuppoſed not to be thus provided for, would not have whereof to glorify God for their being, but on the contrary would have juſt matter of complaint againſt his providence or moral government, for involuntarily neceſſitating them into a wretched and miſerable exiſtence, and that without end or remedy; which would be aſcribing to God a more extenſive injuſtice than is poſſible to be charged on the moſt barbarous deſpots that ever were among mankind.

But to return to our ſpeculations upon the law of nature. _ That this divine law ſurpaſſes all poſitive inſtitutions, that have been uſhered into the world ſince its creation, as much as the wiſdom and goodneſs of God exceeds that of man, is beautifully illuſtrated in the following quotation; "But it may be ſaid, what is virtue? it is the faithful diſcharge of thoſe obligations which reaſon dictates. And what is wiſdom itſelf? but a portion of intelligence" with which the creator has furniſhed us," "in order to direct us in our duty. It may be further aſked, what is this duty? whence does it reſult? and by what law it is preſcribed? I anſwer, that the law which preſcribed it is the immutable will of God; to which right reaſon obliges us to conform ourſelves, and in this conformity virtue conſiſts. No law which has commenced ſince the creation, or which may ever ceaſe to be in force, can conſtitute virtue; for before the exiſtence of ſuch a law, mankind could not be bound to obſerve it, but they were certainly under an obligation to be virtuous from the beginning. Princes may make laws and repeal them, but they can neither make nor deſtroy virtue, and how indeed ſhould they be able to do what is impoſſible to the Deity himſelf: virtue being as immutable in its nature as the divine will, which is the ground of it.* A Prince may command his ſubjects to pay certain taxes or ſubſidies, may forbid them to export certain commodities, or to introduce thoſe of a foreign country. The faithful obſervance of theſe laws makes obedient ſubjects, but does not make virtuous men: and would any one ſeriouſly think himſelf poſſeſſed of a virtue the more for not having dealt in painted callicoe; or if the Prince ſhould by his authority abrogate theſe laws, would any one ſay he had abrogated virtue. It is thus with all poſitive laws: they all had a beginning, are all liable to exceptions, and may be diſpenſed with, and even aboliſhed. That law alone, which is ingraven on our hearts by the hand of the creator, is unchangeable and of univerſal and eternal obligation. The law, ſays Cicero, is not a human invention,

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* Virtue, did not derive its nature merely from the omnipotent will of God, but alſo from the eternal truth and moral fitneſs of things; which was the eternal reaſon, why they were eternally approved of by God, and immutably eſtabliſhed by him, to be what they are; and ſo far as our duty is connected with thoſe eternal meaſures of moral fitneſs, or we are able to act upon them, we give ſuch actions, or habits, the name of virtue or morality. But when we in writing or converſation ſay, that virtue is grounded on the divine will, we ſhould at the ſame time include in the complex idea of it, that the divine will, which conſtituted virtue, was eternally and infinitely reaſonable.

tion, nor an arbitrary political inſtitution, it is in its nature eternal and of univerſal obligation. The violence Tarquin offered to Lucretia, was breach of that eternal law, and though the Romans at that time might have no written law which condemned ſuch kind of crimes, his offence was not the leſs heineous; for this law of reaſon did not then begin, when it was firſt committed to writing: its original is as antient as the divine mind. For the true, primitive and ſupreme law, in no other than the unerring reaſon of the great Jupiter. And in another place he ſays; this law is founded in nature, it is univerſal, immutable and eternal, it is ſubject to no change from any difference of place, or time, it extends invariably to all ages and nations, like the ſovereign dominion of that being, who is the author of it."

THE promulgation of this ſupreme law to creatures, is co extenſive and co-exiſtent with reaſon, and binding on all intelligent beings in the univerſe; and is that eternal rule of fitneſs, as applicable to God, by which the creator of all things conducts his infinitude of providence, and by which he governs the moral ſyſtem of being, according to the abſolute perfection of his nature. From hence we infer, that admitting thoſe ſubſequent revelations, which have more or leſs obtained credit in the world, as the inſpired laws of God, to be conſonant to the laws of nature, yet they could be conſidered as none other but mere tranſcripts therefrom, promulgated to certain favorite nations, when at the ſame time all mankind was favoured with the original. The moral precepts contained in Moſes's decalogue to the people of Iſrael, were previouſly known to every nation under heaven, and in all probability by them as much practiſed as by the tribes of Iſrael. Their keeping the ſeventh day of the week as a ſabbath, was an arbitrary impoſition of Moſes (as many other of his edicts were) and not included in the law of nature. But as to ſuch laws of his, or thoſe of any other legiſlator, which are morally fit, agree with, and are a part of the natural law, as for inſtance; "Thou ſhalt not covet," or "Kill." Theſe poſitive injunctions cannot add any thing to the law of nature, inaſmuch as it contains an entire and perfect ſyſtem of morality; nor can any poſitive injunctions or commands enforce the authority of it, or confer any additional moral obligation on thoſe to whom they are given to obey; the previous obligation of natural religion, having ever been as binding as reaſon can poſſibly conceive of, or the order and conſtitution of the moral rectitude of things, as reſulting from God, can make it to be.

To illuſtrate the argument of the obligatory nature of the natural law, let us reverſe the commandments of the decalogue, by premiſing that Moſes had ſaid thou ſhalt covet, thou ſhalt ſteal and murder; would any one conclude, that the injunctions would have been obligatory, ſurely they would not, for a poſitive command to violate the law of nature could not be binding on any rational being, how then came the injunctions of Moſes, or any others, to be binding in ſuch caſes, in which they coincide with the law of nature? We anſwer, merely in conſequence of the obligatory ſanctions of the natural law, which does not at all depend on the authority of Moſes or of any other Legiſlator, ſhort of him who is eternal and infinite: nor is it poſſible that the Jews, who adhere to the law of Moſes, ſhould be under greater obligation to the moral law, than the Japanneſe; or the Chriſtians than the Chineſe; for the ſame God extends the ſame moral government over univerſal rational nature, independent of Popes, Prieſts and Levites. But with reſpect to all mere poſitive inſtitutions, injunctions, rites and ceremonies, that do not come within the juriſdiction of the law of nature, they are political matters, and may be enacted, perpetuated, diſpenſed with, aboliſhed, re-enacted, compounded or diverſified, as conveniency, power, opportunity, inclination, or intereſt, or all together may dictate; inaſmuch as they are not founded on any ſtable or univerſal principle of reaſon, but change with the cuſtoms, faſhions, traditions and revolutions of the world; having no centre of attraction, but intereſt, power and advantages of a tempory nature.

When we reflect on the ſtate and circumſtances of mankind in this world, their various languages and interchangeable methods of communicating intelligence to each other, (which are ſubject to perpetual alterations and refinements) the inſuperable difficulties in tranſlating antient writings, with any conſiderable degree of perfection; as alſo our being expoſed to the villainous practices of impoſtors, with a variety of other deceptions, blunders and inaccuracies, which unavoidably attend written and diverſe or variouſly tranſlated revelations; we cannot too much admire the wiſdom and goodneſs of God in imparting his law to us in the conſtitution of our rational nature, to point out our duty in all circumſtances and viciſſitudes of human life; which a written revelation would not be able to do, admitting, that it had ſuſtained no ſpurious alterations from its firſt compoſure, which we will premiſe to have been perfect: for human affairs are ſo conſtantly changing and varying, that the ſame action, or conduct, would, under different circumſtances, be alternately good and evil; and to have our duty in every of the multiplicity of incidental circumſtances and changes of life, pointed out to us by a written revelation, would compoſe a Bible of a monſtrous ſize. Furthermore, as every individual of the human race is attended with more or leſs diverſity of circumſtances of action in life, therefore in order for us to be taught our duty by a written revelation, it would be requiſite, that each individual of mankind ſhould have their particular, and diverſe revelation; in which their particular duty might be known in all caſes: ſo that we ſhould ſuſpend our actions, until we may be ſuppoſed to have turned to the particular paragraph of our reſpective revelations, and conſulted them, in order to conduct our agency thereby (in which caſe printing would be in great demand.) Still there would be a difficulty in underſtanding an external printed revelation, or which paragraph of the bulky volume would be applicable to the various parts of the conduct of human agency; ſo that we ſhould be obliged finally to make uſe of (depraved) reaſon, to underſtand it, or, in other words, ſhould be obliged to make uſe of the deiſtical Bible to explain and underſtand our own, which brings us back again to the religion of nature or reaſon.

Was it not that we were rational creatures, it would have been as ridiculous to have pretended to have given us a Bible, for our inſtruction in matters of religion or morality, as it would to a ſtable of horſes. And on the other hand, admitting that we naturally underſtand moral good and evil, it renders ſuch a book no ways eſſential to us, though if it be admitted to be argumentative and inſtructive, it might, like other ſenſible writings, ſubſerve mankind; but if it is ſuppoſed to be in part defective in reaſon, and interſperſed with ſuperſtition, it would, under the ſanction of divine authority, be vaſtly more prejudicial to mankind, than as though it was ſtamped merely by the authority of man; for an error in that which is received as infallible, can never be confuted or rectified; inaſmuch as it uſurps the authority of human reaſon. Furthermore, admitting that the copies of written revelation, which are now extant in the world, perfectly accord with their ſeveral original manuſcripts (which is impoſſible to be true) yet they could not be equally inſtructive to mankind with the productions of a variety of modern authors, who have written ſince their epocha, inaſmuch as the world has ever ſince been improving in learning and ſcience; and as thoſe written revelations muſt neceſſarily have been (as to their ſubject matter and all and every other particular) accommodated to the ſtate, circumſtances and degrees of learning and knowledge, of thoſe, to whom the revelations were firſt ſuppoſed to have been communicated, and alſo to thoſe to whom it was afterwards taught, and it would reduce it below the underſtanding of this age. For it appears from the ſcripture accounts, that ſhepherds, fiſhermen, and the illiterate of thoſe early ages of the world, were principally made uſe of as the promulgators thereof to the reſt of mankind, and that "Not many wiſe or noble," were "Called," or embraced their revelations in the early times, "But the weak things of this world" were "Choſen," for which reaſon they were called "Babes:" Though after ſuch religion became popular, princes and politicians of ſeveral parts of the world promoted it as an inſtrument of ſtate-policy. Be this as it will, the firſt promulgators of written revelations could not reveal to the world more than they knew themſelves; nor could they be made to know any more than their capacity (under their then circumſtances) was capable of receiving: any external written revelation is therefore utterly incompatible with a progreſſive or increaſing ſtate of knowledge. We will premiſe, that the world's diſſolution will be poſtponed one hundred thouſand million of years from this epocha, or that it will eternally remain, what an idle conceit would it be for us to ſuppoſe, that the ſucceeding generations of mankind, in their religious knowledge, will be chained down to the theology of thoſe poſitive written revelations, which were introduced into the world, in its early, illiterate, and ſuperſtitious age; this would be utterly ſubverſive of a ſtate of proficiency, much the ſame as for a man to conſult his nonage for rules of knowledge, and inſtruction to govern his manhood.

Was the creator and Governor of the univerſe to erect a particular academy of arts and ſciences in this world, under his immediate inſpection, with tutors rightly organized, and intellectually qualified to carry on the buſineſs of teaching, it might like other colleges (and poſſibly in a ſuperior manner,) inſtruct its ſcholars. But that God ſhould have given a revelation of his will to mankind, as, his law, and to be continued to the lateſt poſterity as ſuch, which is premiſed to be above the capacity of their underſtanding; is contradictory and in its own nature impoſſible. Nor could a revelation to mankind, which comes within the circle of their knowledge, be edifying or inſtructive to them, for it is a contradiction to call that which is above my comprehenſion, or that which I already, (from natural ſagacity) underſtand, a revelation to me: to tell me, or inſpire me, with the knowledge of that which I knew before, would reveal nothing to me and to reveal that to me which is ſupernatural or above my comprehenſion, is cantradictory and impoſſible. But the truth of the matter is, that mankind are reſtricted by the law of nature to acquire knowledge or ſcience progreſſively, as before argued. From which we infer the impropriety, and conſequently the impoſſibility, of God's having ever given us any manuſcript copy of his eternal law: for that to reveal it at firſt would bring it on a level with the infancy of knowledge then in the world, or (fiſhermen ſhepherds, and illiterate people could not have underſtood it) which would have brought it ſo low, that it could not be inſtructive or beneficial to after generations in their progreſſive advances in ſcience and wiſdom.

Chapter VI.

SECTION, I.

Argumentative Reflections on SUPERNATURAL *and* MYSTERIOUS REVELATION *in general.*

THERE is not any thing, which has contributed ſo much to delude mankind in religious matters, as miſtaken apprehenſions concerning ſupernatural inſpiration or revelation; not conſidering, that all true religion originates from reaſon, and can no otherwiſe be underſtood, but by the exerciſe and improvement of it; therefore they are apt to confuſe their minds with ſuch inconſiſtencies. In the ſubſequent reaſonings on this ſubject, we ſhall argue againſt ſupernatural revelation in general which will comprehend the doctrine of inſpiration or immediate illumination of the mind. And firſt; we will premiſe, that a revelation conſiſts of an aſſemblage of rational ideas, intelligibly arranged and underſtood by thoſe to whom it may be ſuppoſed to be revealed; for otherwiſe, it could not exiſt in their minds as ſuch. To ſuppoſe a revelation, void of rationality or underſtanding, or of communicating rational intelligence to thoſe, to whom it may be ſuppoſed to be given, would be a contradiction; for that it would contain nothing except it were unintelligibleneſs which would be the ſame as to reveal and not to reveal; therefore, a revelation muſt conſiſt of an aſſemblage of rational ideas, intelligibly communicated to thoſe who are ſuppoſed to have been the partakers or receivers of it; from the firſt ſuppoſed inſpiration, down to this or any other period of time. But ſuch a revelation as this, could be nothing more or leſs than a tranſcript of the law of nature, predicated on reaſon, and would be no more ſupernatural, than the reaſon of man may be ſuppoſed to be. The ſimple definition of ſupernatural is, that which is "Beyond or above the powers of nature," which never was or can be underſtood by mankind; the firſt promulgators of revelation not excepted; for ſuch revelation, doctrine, precept or inſtruction only, as comes within the powers of our nature, is capable of being apprehended, contemplated or underſtood by us, and ſuch, as does not, is to us incomprehenſible and unknown, and conſequently cannot for us compoſe any part of revelation.

The author of human nature impreſſed it with certain ſenſitive aptitudes and mental powers, ſo that apprehenſion, reflection or underſtanding could no otherwiſe be exerted or produced in the compound nature of man, but in the order preſcribed by the creator. It would therefore be a contradiction in nature,and conſequently impoſſible for God to inſpire, infuſe, or communicate the apprehenſion, reflection or underſtanding of any thing whatever into human nature, out of, above, or beyond the natural aptitudes, and mental powers of that nature, which was of his own production and conſtitution ; for it would be the ſame as to inſpire,infuſe, or reveal apprehenſion, reflection or underſtanding, to that which is not ; inaſmuch as out of, beyond or above the powers of nature, there could be nothing to operate upon, as a prerequiſite principle to receive the inſpiration or infuſion of the revelation, which might therefore as well be inſpired into, or revealed to nonentity, as to man. For the eſſence of man is that, which we denominate to be his nature, out of or above which he is as void of ſenſation, apprehenſion, reflection or underſtanding, as nonentity may be ſuppoſed to be ; therefore ſuch revelation as is adapted to the nature and capacity of man, and comes within his powers of perception and underſtanding, is the only revelation, which he is able to receive from God or man. Supernatural revelation, is as applicable to beaſts, birds and fiſhes, as it is to us; for neither we, nor they are capable of being acted upon ſupernaturally, as all the poſſible exertions and operations of nature, which reſpect the natural or moral world, are truly natural. Nor does God deviate from his rectitude of nature in matters of inſpiration, revelation or inſtruction to the moral world, any more than in that of his government of the natural. Man is a ſpecies of being who belongs in part to both worlds, therefore, was God to reveal any particular thing to us, he muſt of courſe adapt his revelation to our bodies, as well as to our ſouls; or to our ſenſes as well as to our reaſon: but a revelation ſo adapted would be natural inſtead of ſupernatural. Which truly is the caſe reſpecting all our ſenſations, reflections and underſtandings. We will premiſe that at a future time God ſhould ſuperadd a ſixth ſenſe to our ſenſorium, and that inconceivably diverſe from our preſent five ſenſes, and as miſterious to us at preſent, as the idea of colours are to perſons born blind, by which, when ſuperadded to the other ſenſes, we might perceive and underſtand ſuch things, as at preſent are myſterious or ſupernatural to us, and which without the beforementioned ſixth ſenſe would have eternally remained ſo, but that ſenſe being once added to the ſenſorium, would become as natural as the other ſenſes, and the premiſed additional knowledge acquired by it, would be as natural as that which is produced by the inſtrumentality of the other five ſenſes; ſo that ſuperaddition to nature, was it poſſible, and a fact, would not at all contribute to evince the poſſibility of a ſupernatural revelation: ſo likewiſe admitting that God ſhould ſuperadd mental ability to the principle of the human ſoul, by which, with the five ſenſes only, it could form ſimple ideas, and extend its reaſonings to a far greater progreſſion than previous to or without ſuch addional mental ability it could have done; ſtill the extenſiveneſs of ſuch ſuppoſed reaſonings would be as natural, as that which may be ſuppoſed to be acquired by the previous mental powers, or that which was ſuppoſed to be acquired by the inſtrumentality of the ſixth ſenſe before mentioned. For if it be ſuppoſed, that either ſenſation or reaſon, or both, be ever ſo much enlarged by a ſuperaddition, or the mind ever ſo much improved and enlarged by any and all poſſible methods, ſtill progreſſion in knowledge would not be ſupernatural, whether in conſequence of a ſuppoſed ſuperaddition to nature, or by the improvement of our preſent compounded natural powers, of ſenſation or reaſon or both. Should the perception or knowledge of colours or of ſound be communicated to thoſe who are born blind or deaf, or both, and who ever after continue to be ſo, ſuch diſcoveries would be ſupernatural; as, on this poſition, there could have been no pre-requiſite ſenſitive power or aptitude, which the minds of thoſe who were ſuppoſed to be born blind or deaf, could have made uſe of, in acquiring the premiſed knowledge of colours or of ſound. Therefore, when ſuch diſcoveries as theſe are made, we muſt admit them to be "beyond or above the powers of nature," which is the ſame as ſupernatural; ſo likewiſe ſhould we extend our knowledge beyond the limits of our mental capacity, or, which is the ſame, to underſtand more than we do or can underſtand, it would be ſupernatural: and when ſuch facts as theſe take place in the world, it will be time enough to credit ſupernatural revelation. The infinitude of the wiſdom of God's creation, providence and moral government will eternally remain ſupernatural to all finite capacities, and for that very reaſon we can never arrive to the comprehenſion of it, in any ſtate of being and improvement whatever: inaſmuch as progreſſion can never attain to that which is infinite, ſo that an eternal proficiency in knowledge could not be ſupernatural, but on the other hand would come within the limits and powers of our nature, for otherwiſe ſuch proficiency would be impoſſible to us; nor is the infinite knowledge of God ſupernatural to him, for that his perfection is alſo infinite. But if we could break over the limits of our capacity, ſo as to underſtand any one ſupernatural thing, which is above or beyond the power of our natures, we might by that rule as well underſtand all things, and thus by breaking over the confines of finite nature and the rank of being which we hold in the univerſe, comprehend the knowledge of infinity. From hence we infer, that every kind and degree of apprehenſion, reflection and underſtanding, which we can attain to in any ſtate of improvement whatever, is no more ſupernatural than the nature of man, from whence perception and underſtanding is produced, may be ſuppoſed to be ſo: nor has or could God Almighty ever have revealed himſelf to mankind in any other way or manner, but what is truly natural.

All manner of inſpiration, revelation, inſtruction or underſtanding muſt unavoidably be denominated to be natural or ſupernatural, as there is no third way or medium between theſe two; ſo that if inſtead of the word ſupernatural, we adopt the words immediate, ſpecial, inſtantaneous, or any other phraſes, yet we muſt be careful to affix the ſame definition or ideas to thoſe ſeveral words or phraſeology, as we do to the word ſupernatural, when applied to revelation, viz. "that which is beyond or above the powers of nature." So that when we make uſe of any terms whatever to define revelation, we muſt be ſure to mean ſupernatural, for otherwiſe we ſhould define revelation to be no more than natural, which in the opinion of ſome people would ſpoil it, and diveſt it of all its charms; as moſt believers are fond of a revelation, which they unintelligibly imagine to be ſupernatural, though neither they nor any body elſe know any thing what it is. The word *myſtery*, as applied to revelation, has the ſame impropriety as the word ſupernatural. To reveal, is to make known, but for a myſtery to compoſe any part of a revelation, is abſurd; for it is the ſame as to reveal and not reveal at the ſame time; for was it revealed, it would ceaſe to be myſterious or ſupernatural, but together with other parts of our knowledge would become natural. Was a revelation, like other writings, adapted to our capacity, it might like them be inſtructive to us; but a myſterious or ſupernatural one would not. For ſuch doctrine, precept or injunction, which is unintelligible to us, the terms, poſitions and inferences whereof exceed our comprehenſion, or "concerning which our ideas are inadequate," (which is the very definition of a miſtery) cannot be ſo much as examined into, or contemplated upon by us, nor could a ſtate of improvement unfold thoſe myſterious things, for which our ideas are altogether inadequate. Such knowledge as we acquire by improvement, is that to which our capacity is adequate, or we could not attain it. But admitting that the knowledge of a miſterious revelation may be arrived at merely by improvement, ſtill ſuch a revelation, (though it is improper to call it ſo) could not be inſtructive, which muſt be the end and deſign of a ſuppoſed revelation, for ſuch a premiſed improvement would have comprehended it as well without it as with it. For if reaſon has to advance its progreſſion of knowledge, independent of any aſſiſtance from the ſuppoſed myſterious revelation, untill it is ſuppoſed to comprehend it, it would render it altogether uninſtructive and uſeleſs; inaſmuch as the comprehenſion or underſtanding of it is ſuppoſed to be obtained by the exerciſe and improvement of reaſon, without any aſſiſtance from the hidden myſtery itſelf, which could not be revealed until reaſon, by natural improvement, came upſides with it, and by thus exploring the knowledge of a myſterious revelation, would at the ſame time nullify the unfulneſs of it.

And as reaſon is naturally progreſſive in its operations, having once rivaled ſuch revelation, would ſtill advance its improvement beyond it, which, when reaſon had once ſurpaſſed, could gain no inſtruction therefrom, any more than it did in its previous progreſſion in rivalling it.

SECTION II.

Containing OBSERVATIONS *on the* PROVIDENCE *and* AGENCY *of* GOD, *as it reſpects the Natural and Moral World, with* STRICTURES *on* REVELATION *in general.*

ALTHOUGH the apprehenſions, cogitations, reaſonings and agency of mankind are perfectly comprehended in the divine Omniſcience, nevertheleſs our nature is not ſuſceptible of immediate revelation from God, or mere ſpirits or mental beings, on which our ſenſes cannot operate; on account of the diſſimilarity of their natures to ours, they are incapable of making any impreſſion on our organs of ſenſe, or ſo much as to repreſent one ſimple idea to the mind, much leſs to correſpond with us on the ſublime topics of religion, philoſophy or ſcience, inaſmuch as in this life we are abſolutely indebted to our external ſenſes for our firſt apprehenſions of the objects of ſenſe, which we denominate to be pure ſimple ideas, without which we cannot exert our minds in any manner at all, as argued in the firſt and ſecond Sections of the fourth Chapter, to which I refer. Senſation in the order of nature is the predicate of ſimple ideas, and ſimple ideas the predicate of reflection, and reflection continued is a ſucceſſion of thinking, and by comparing two or more ideas (whether they are mere ſimple ones, or ſuch as are derived therefrom) together, we perceive their agreement, or diſagreement which adds ſtill to the train of a complex reflection, that under the guidance of reaſon is formed into premiſes and argumentative deductions, and ſo on to the extent of the mind's capacity, ſo that the whole ſuperſtructure of our reaſoning is demonſtratively predicated on ſimple ideas, which reſult mediately from the inſtrumentality of the ſenſes, through the medium whereof the mind is enabled to diſplay its rational nature. This then is the eſtabliſhed order of the compound nature of man, wherein the perceptions of ſenſe are prerequiſitely eſſential to the exertions and diſcoveries of the mind, by which only we are capable of receiving intelligence or revelation from God or man, or from any other intelligencies. God is inviſible to us, and does not come within the notice of our groſs ſenſations. The idea of a God we infer from our experimental dependence on ſomething ſuperior to ourſelves in wiſdom, power and goodneſs, which we call God ; our ſenſes diſcover to us the works of God which we call nature, and which is a manifeſt demonſtration of his inviſible eſſence. Thus it is from the works of nature that we deduce the knowledge of a God, and not becauſe we have, or can have any immediate knowledge of, or revelation from him. But on the other hand, all our underſtanding of, or intelligence from God,is communicated to us by the intervention of natural cauſes, (which is not of the divine eſſence) this we denominate to be natural revelation, for that it is mediately made known to us by our ſenſes, and from our ſenſations of external objects in general, ſo that all and every part of the univerſe, of which we have any conception, is exterior from the nature or eſſence of God ; nor is it in the nature of things poſſible for us to receive, or for God to communicate any inſpiration or revelation to us, but by the inſtrumentality of intermediate cauſes, as has been before obſerved. Therefore all our notions of the immediate interpoſition of divine illuminations, inſpiration or infuſion of ideas or revelations, into our minds, is mere enthuſiaſm and deception ; for that neither the divine mind, nor thoſe of any finite intelligences can make any repreſentation to, or impreſſion on our external ſenſes without the aſſiſtance of ſome adequate intermediate cauſe. The ſame is the caſe between man and man, or with mankind in general, we can no otherwiſe hold a correſpondence but by the aptitude, and through the medium of our ſenſes. Since this is the only poſſible way in nature by which we can receive any notices, perceptions, or intelligence from God or man, or from thoſe light beings called miniſtering ſpirits, angels or any imperceptible intelligences whatever; therefore provided they hold any intercourſe with, or communicate any intelligence concerning religion, ſcience or politics to us, they muſt do it by making uſe of proper intermediate cauſes, the ſame as we do in our mutual correſpondence, or by ſome ſimilar, or at leaſt natural method of communicating their minds to us. For our nature cannot aſcend to the ſuperior manner of exiſtence and interchangeable correſpondence with thoſe ſuperior beings, but they muſt deſcend to the inferior capacity of mankind, or keep their diſtance in the ſcale of being, and let us *clod-hoppers* alone to our manner of exiſtence, communication of ideas and reaſoning, that we may enjoy our book of nature, which undoubtedly is adapted to our various capacities and to our ſeveral relations, ſtations and circumſtances in life. Nothing can be more unreaſonable, than to ſuppoſe, becauſe God is infinitely powerful, that he can therefore inſpire or infuſe perception, reflection or revelation into the mind of man in ſuch a way or manner as is incompatible with the aptitudes and powers of their nature; ſuch a revelation would be as impoſſible to be revealed by God, as by a mere creature. For though it is a maxim of truth, "That with God all things are poſſible," yet it ſhould be conſidered, that contradictions and conſequently impoſſibilities are not comprehended in the difinition of things, but are diametrically the reverſe of them, as may be ſeen in the definition of the word THINGS, *to wit*; "Whatever is." There is no contradiction in nature or truth, which comprehends or contains all things, therefore the maxim is juſt, "That with God all things are poſſible," *viz*; all things in nature are poſſible with God; but contradictions are falſehoods which have no poſitive exiſtence, but are the negatives to THINGS, or to nature, which comprehends, "Whatever is;" ſo that contradictions are oppoſed to nature and truth, and are no THINGS, but the chimeras of weak, unintelligent minds who make falſe application of things to perſons, or aſcribe ſuch powers, qualities, diſpoſitions and aptitudes to things, as nature never inveſted them with; ſuch are our deluded notions of the immediate operations of the holy ſpirit, or of any mere ſpirit, on our minds independent of the intervention of ſome adequate, natural or intermediate cauſe. To make a triangle four ſquare, or to make a variety of mountains contigiouſly ſituated, without vallies, or to give exiſtence to a thing and not to give exiſtence to it at the ſame time, or to reveal any thing to us incompatible with our capacity of receiving the perception of it, pertains to thoſe negatives to nature and truth, and are not things revealed, nor have they any poſitive exiſtence as has been before argued; for they are inconſiſtent with themſelves, and the relations and effects which they are ſuppoſed to have upon and with each other. It derogates nothing from the power and abſolute perfection of God that he cannot make both parts of a contradiction to be true. The figure of a triangle and that of a ſquare is diverſe the one from the other in the eſſentials of their formation, ſo that the one is not and cannot be of the ſame ſhape as the other; for the ſame figure, which gives the exiſtence of the truth of the triangle, negatives the poſſibility of its being a ſquare, and the ſame truth which is predicated on the form and figure of the mountains, neceſſarily gives being to the figure of the vallies at the ſame time: The figure of the latter reſults from, and is neceſſarily produced by the figure of the former, nor is it poſſible for Omnipotence itſelf to give the mountains and the vallies

lies an independent and ſeperate exiſtence from each other; likewiſe the ſame truth, which is predicated on the fact of the exiſtence of any thing, denies the poſſibility of its not exiſting at the ſame time So alſo that God ſhould make a revelation to men, or make any diſcoveries to their minds in a ſupernatural manner, or incompatible with the aptitudes of their ſenſitive or mental powers, is as contradictory as either of the before mentioned natural impoſſibilities; for the ſame truth which is predicated on the fact of the inability of mankind to receive ſuch revelation, inſpiration or illumination, as is incompatible with their nature, abſolutely forbids the poſſibility of their perception of it, and conſequently of their underſtanding any thing leſs or more about it, it being unnatural and altogether prepoſterous. But let us reverſe the poſition concerning revelation, and premiſe that it is accommodated to our capacity of receiving and underſtanding it, and in this caſe it would be natural, and therefore poſſible for us to receive and underſtand it; for the ſame truth which is predicated on the ſufficiency of our capacity to receive and underſtand a revelation, affirms at the ſame time the poſſibility of our receiving and underſtanding it. But to ſuppoſe that God can make both parts of a contradiction to be true, to reveal and not reveal would be the ſame as aſcribing a falſhood to him and to call it by the name of power (tho' it ought to be called by its deformed name of falſehood) is by no means good logic, and only ſerves to delude weak minds, by dignifying an inconſiderate application of falſhood to God, with the ideas, with which, in our language we define the word power. Had the juſt definition of making both parts of a contradiction, to be true, been always called by its right name, *viz.* falſhood, and the natural or moral impoſſibility of it, been rightly underſtood by mankind (and that inſtead of honoring and magnifying God, it is nothing leſs or more than aſcribing falſhood, contradiction and inconſiſtency unto him, which is unworthy of God and incompatible with truth,) they had never aſcribed it to God, or yielded their reaſon captive to have believed ſuch abſurdities.

That God can do any thing and every thing, that is conſonant to his moral perfections, and which does not imply a contradiction to the nature of the things themſelves, and the eſſential relation which they bear to each other, none will diſpute. But to ſuppoſe, that inaſmuch as God is all-powerful, he can therefore do every thing, which we in our ignorance of nature or of moral fitneſs may aſcribe to him, without underſtanding, whether it is either conſonant to moral rectitude, or to the nature of the things themſelves, and the immutable relations and connections which they bear to each other, or not, is great weakneſs and folly. That God cannot in the exerciſe of his providence or moral government, counteract the perfections of his nature, or do any manner of injuſtice, is manifeſtly certain; nor is it poſſible for God to effect a contradiction in the natural world, any more than in the moral: The impoſſibility of the one reſults from the moral perfections of God, and the impoſſibility of the other from the immutable properties, qualities, relations and nature of the things themſelves, as in the inſtances of the mountains, vallies, &c. before alluded to, and in numberleſs other ſuch like caſes.

SOME may query in behalf of the doctrine of ſupernatural or immediate revelations, that though the far greater part of our ideas and ſucceſſion of thought is natural, and is the reſult of ſimple ideas and reflections, naturally flowing from our ſenſitive and cogitative nature, and that in ſo obvious a manner that we are not at a loſs as to the real cauſe of their excitement, yet we are often nonpluſed and ſurprized with thought and reflection, of which we know not the cauſe of their excitement, or why ſuch ideas ſhould be produced in our minds, rather than others. But ſuch an inſpiration as this would not ſerve to conſtitute a revelation ſufficient to authorize us to publiſh it to the world as God's truth, and dictated by his inſpiration, when at the ſame time it conſiſted (as before obſerved) of ſudden and ſurprizing reflections, and why they were excited rather than others we knew not, or from whence they came. As to ſuch ſtrange and frightful ideas, which appear to us to be inſtantaneous, why ſhould they be ſuppoſed to be ſupernatural? For there is not any thing which we can conceive of quicker than thought. It is our ſuperlative compariſon to any thing ſurprizingly ſudden to us, that we ſay, "as quick as thought." But the reaſon why we are tranſported with hope or fear, joy or grief, pleaſure or pain, is not becauſe thoſe paſſions, or the ideas that move them, are leſs natural, but becauſe they are really ſo, and particularly reſpect our intereſt and happineſs, either real or imaginary; this is it which ſurprizes us: but the cauſe of the excitement of our perceptions, and conſequently of our reflections, is in part owing to the multiplicity of the diverſe objects of ſenſe, which at different times diſcloſe themſelves to the mind and partly to the ſubject matter of reflection, which the mind alternately purſues in all poſſible varieties of thinking, contriving and argumentation; ſo that the chain of reflection more naturally inclines the mind to form ſuch ideas as it does, than others. Beſides, there is a great ſimilarity in the objects of ſenſe themſelves, and alſo in the method of reaſoning from them, and from the reflections that are produced by ſimple ideas, which are ſurpriſingly more numerous than thoſe corporeal images are. So that in the courſe of our perceptions, reflections, ſpeculations and argumentations, our ideas in many inſtances run one into another; as in the inſtance of the almoſt imperceptibleneſs of the gradations of colours, or the gradual tranſition from night to day, or from truth to falſhood, in remote, perplexed and intricate caſes. This great ſimilarity that there is in things, naturally excites ſimilar ideas, or thoſe of a near or more remote reſemblance, and thoſe again excite others of a correſponding ſort, and ſo on throughout the courſe of human perceptions and reflections. Theſe are the great outlines of the natural cauſes of the excitement, diverſity and ſimilarity of our ideas, which to point out with any conſiderable degree of particularity and accuracy would ſwell to a volume; which is foreign to my deſign in this conciſe ſyſtem, that treats of a great variety of ſubjects and therefore demands brevity.

Admitting a revelation to be from God, it muſt be allowed to be infallible, therefore thoſe to whom it may be ſuppoſed to have been firſt revealed from God, muſt have had an infallible certainty of their inſpiration : ſo likewiſe the reſt of mankind, to whom it is propoſed as a Divine Law, or rule of duty, ſhould have an infallible certainty, that its firſt promulgators were thus truly inſpired by the immediate interpoſition of the ſpirit of God, and that the revelation has been preſerved through all the changes and revolutions of the world to their time, and that the copies extant preſent them with its original inſpiration and unerring compoſure, or are perfectly agreeable to it. All this we muſt have an infallible certainty of, or we fail of an infallible certainty of revelation, and are liable to be impoſed upon by impoſtors, or by ignorant or inſidious teachers, whoſe intereſt it may be to obtrude their own ſyſtems on the world for infallible truth, as in the inſtance of Mahomet.

But let us conſult our own conſtitutions and the world in which we live, and we ſhall find, that inſpiration is,in the very nature of things,impoſſible to be underſtood by us ; and of conſequence not in fact true. What certainty can we have of the agency of the divine mind on ours ? Or how can we diſtinguiſh the ſuppoſed divine illuminations or ideas from thoſe of our own which are natural to us? In order for us to be certain of the interpoſition of immediate divine inſpiration in our minds, we muſt be able to analyſe, diſtinguiſh, and diſtinctly ſeperate the premiſed divine reflections, illuminations, or inſpiration, from our own natural cogitations, for otherwiſe we ſhould be liable to miſtake our reflections and reaſonings for God's inſpiration, as is the caſe with enthuſiaſts, or fanatics, and thus impoſe on ourſelves, and obtrude our romantic notions on mankind, as God's revelation.

None will (it is preſumed) pretend, that the natural reflections of our minds are dictated by the immediate agency of the divine ſpirit; for if they were thus dictated, they would be of equal authority with any ſuppoſed inſpired revelation. How then ſhall we be able to diſtinguiſh or underſtand our natural perceptions, reflections or reaſonings, from any premiſed immediately inſpired ones? Should God make known to us, or to any of us, a revelation by a voice, and that in a language which we underſtand, and admitting that the propoſitions, doctrines, or ſubject matter of it, ſhould not exceed our capacity, we could underſtand it the ſame as we do in converſation with one another, but this would be an external and natural revelation, in which God is ſuppoſed to make uſe of language, grammar, logic and ſound, *alias*, of intermediate cauſes, in order to communicate or reveal it, which would differ as much from an immediately inſpired revelation, as this book may be ſuppoſed to do; for the very diffinition of immediate inſpiration precludes all natural or intermediate cauſes. That God is eternally perfect in knowledge, and therefore knows all things, not by ſucceſſion or by parts, as we underſtand things by degrees, has been already evinced; nevertheleſs all truth, which we arrive at the underſtanding of, accords with the divine omniſcience, but we do not come at the comprehenſion of things by immediate infuſion, or inſpiration, but from reaſoning; for we cannot ſee or hear God think or reaſon any more than man, nor are our ſenſes ſuſceptible of a mere mental communion with him, nor is it in nature poſſible for the human mind to receive any inſtantaneous or immediate illuminations or ideas from the divine ſpirit (as before argued) but we muſt illuminate and improve our minds by a cloſe application to the ſtudy of nature, through the ſeries whereof God has been pleaſed to reveal himſelf to man, ſo that we may truly ſay, that the knowledge of nature is the revelation of God. In this there can be no deluſion, it is natural, and could come from none other but God.

But ſhould we admit that the divine mind thinks and reflects in our minds, in this caſe it would not be our mind which thinks and reflects, but the divine mind only, of which we could have no manner of perception or conſciouſneſs; for the divine conſciouſneſs thereof would not be communicable to us. But if it be our mind only which thinks and reflects, then it excludes the agency of the divine mind, for the divine and human minds are not of the ſame eſſence, and conſequently the conſciouſneſs of the divine mind cannot be the conſciouſneſs of ours; though the divine omniſcience extends to our conſciouſneſs, as ſuch; for God cannot be conſcious that our conſciouſneſs is his, for it is not true, as we are not of the divine eſſence. Should we conjecture that the divine mind communes with ours, ſo as to think or reflect in or with our minds, but in part, and that we alſo think and reflect in a co-operation with the divinity within us: We argue, that ſuch conjectures are inadmiſſible, for that it confounds the divine and human eſſences together; but as they are not of the ſame eſſence, ſo neither can they be conſcious of the ſame conſciouſneſs in part, any more than in the whole, as before argued. For we could have no manner of perception, of the conjecture, divine agency, or co-operation of the divine mind, as it could not come within the limits of our own conſciouſneſs; and though the divine mind knows all things, and among others the individual conſciouſneſſes of mankind, yet the divine mind cannot be conſcious that our conſciouſneſs is his, in part, any more than in the whole, or that there ever was any co-operation, or immediate infuſion or communication of ideas or illuminations from the divine to the human mind, inaſmuch as it cannot be true. But ſhould we admit of a mere mental correſpondence between the divine and human minds, yet, how could we analyſe or diſtinguiſh the interchangable reflections, which may be ſuppoſed to paſs between the divine mind and ours, ſo as to underſtand which were divine and which were human. Unleſs we could do this, we ſhould compound them together at a venture, and form a revelation like Nebuchadnezar's idol, "partly iron and partly clay," *alias*, partly divine and partly human. The apoſtle Paul informs us, that ſometimes he "ſpake, and not the Lord," and at other times ſpeaks doubtfully about the matter, ſaying, "and I *think* alſo that I have the ſpirit of God," and if he was at a loſs about his inſpiration, well may we be diſtruſtful of it. From the foregoing ſpeculations on the ſubject of ſupernatural inſpiration, it appears, that there are inſuperable difficulties in a mere mental diſcourſe with the divine ſpirit; it is what we are unacquainted with, and the law of our nature forbids it. Our method of converſation is vocal, or by writing, or by ſome ſort of external ſymbols which are the mediate ground of it, and we are liable to errors and miſtakes in this natural and external way of correſpondence; but when we have the vanity to rely on dreams and viſions to inform ourſelves of things, or attempt to commune with inviſible finite beings, or with the holy ſpirit, our deceptions, blunders and confuſions are increaſed to fanaticiſm itſelf; as the diverſe ſuppoſed influence of the ſpirit, on the reſpective ſectaries, even among Chriſtians, may witneſs, as it manifeſtly, in their empty conceit of it, conforms to every of their traditions. Which evinces, that the whole buſtle of it is mere enthuſiaſm, for was it dictated by the ſpirit of truth and uniformity itſelf, it would influence all alike, however zealots perſuade themſelves and one another, that they have ſupernatural communion with the Holy Ghoſt, from whence they tell us they derive their notions of religion, and in their frenzy are proof againſt reaſon and argument, which if we tender them, they tell us, that it is carnal and depraved reaſoning, but that their teachings are immediately from God: and then proceed to vent upon us all the curſes and puniſhments, which are written in the book of the law.

THERE has in the different parts and ages of the world, been a multiplicity of immediate and wonderful diſcoveries, ſaid to have been made to godly men of old by the ſpecial illumination or ſupernatural inſpiration of God, every of which have, in doctrine, precept and inſtruction, been eſſentially different from each other, which are conſequently as repugnant to truth, as the diverſity of the influence of the ſpirit on the multiplicity of ſectaries has been repreſented to be.

THESE facts, together with the premiſes and inferences as already deduced, are too evident to be denied, and operate concluſively againſt immediate or ſupernatural revelation in general; nor will ſuch revelation hold good in theory any more than in practice. Was a revelation to be made known to us, it muſt be accommodated to our external ſenſes, and alſo to our reaſon, ſo that we could come at the perception and underſtanding of it, the ſame as we do to that of things in general. We muſt perceive by our ſenſes, before we can reflect with the mind. Our ſenſorium is that eſſential medium between the divine and human mind, through which God reveals to man the knowledge of nature, and is our only door of correſpondence with God or with man.

A PREMISED revelation, adapted to our external ſenſes, would enable our mental powers to reflect upon, examine into, and underſtand it. Always provided nevertheleſs, that the ſubject matter of ſuch revelation, or that of the doctrines, precepts or injunctions therein contained, do not exceed our reaſon, but are adapted to it as well as to our external ſenſes.

FOR if a revelation be ſuppoſed to ſurpaſs our reaſon, or power of underſtanding, though the external method of communication it be ever ſo familiar and natural, yet it would be as ſupernatural, as though no words or ſigns, which are the explanations of our ideas, had been made uſe of in the matter : inaſmuch as the ideas themſelves are ſuppoſed to be above the power of reaſon, and conſequently could not be formed into poſitions and argumentative deductions or concluſions by it, and after all would remain unintelligible, and therefore not revealed : for that which is beyond the power of reaſon to underſtand, is as ſupernatural to it, as it is to our external ſenſes to correſpond with, or form perceptions of imperceptible beings, or of mere ſpirits. In the one caſe it would be ſupernatural to reaſon, and in the other to ſenſation ; the one may be denominated a mental inability, and the other a bodily inability; the one proceeds from the mind, and the other from the body: but in both theſe caſes the impoſſibility is equal, and in either caſe precludes the reception of a revelation. But admitting, that a revelation was adapted to our ſenſes, language and reaſon, ſtill a ſubſtantial difficulty would ariſe, *viz.* to know whether it came with ſpecial commiſſion from God or not. For a voice ſuited to our language and method of ſpeech, or in a grammatical and logical way of ſpeaking, which we could underſtand, could have no exiſtence, except we admit of intermediate cauſes between the divine and human minds, *viz.* ſomething fitly organiſed or rightly conſtructed and made uſe of by God to convey to our minds, by the uſe of ſpeech, the perception, and conſequently the knowledge of his revelation; for otherwiſe, ſuch a grammatical and logical way of ſpeaking would be unnatural, or impoſſible, which would be the ſame as ſupernatural: which has been ſufficiently confuted, inaſmuch as a proper inſtrument, rightly fitted to divulge the perception and conſequently the underſtanding of a ſuppoſed revelation, would be an eſſential pre-requiſite in order to communicate it to us. To ſuppoſe that God, merely from his omnipotence, without the intervention of ſome adequate intermediate cauſe, could make uſe of ſound, or grammatical and logical language, or of writing, ſo as to correſpond with us, or to reveal any thing to us, would run into the ſame ſort of abſurdity, which we have already confuted; for it is the ſame as to ſuppoſe an effect without a ſuitable or proportionable cauſe, or an effect without a cauſe; whereas effects muſt have adequate cauſes or they could not be produced. God is the ſelf-exiſtent and eternal cauſe of all things, but the eternal cauſe can no otherwiſe operate on the eternal ſucceſſion of cauſes and effects, but by the mutual operation of thoſe cauſes on each other, according to the fixed laws of nature. For as we have frequently obſerved before that of all poſſible ſyſtems, infinite wiſdom comprehended the beſt; and infinite goodneſs and power muſt have adopted and perfected it; and being once eſtabliſhed into an ordinance of nature, it could not be deviated from by God; for that it would neceſſarily imply a manifeſt imperfection in God, either in its eternal eſtabliſhment, or in its premiſed ſubſequent alteration; which will be more particularly conſidered in the next CHAPTER.

To ſuppoſe that almighty power could produce a voice, language, grammar, or logic, ſo as to communicate a revelation to us, without ſome ſort of organic or inſtrumentated machine or intermediate vehicle, or adequate conſtituted external cauſe, would imply a contradiction to the order of nature, and conſequently to the perfection of God, who eſtabliſhed it: therefore, provided God has ever given us any particular revelation, we muſt ſuppoſe, that he has made uſe of a regular and natural conſtituted and mediate cauſe, comprehended in the eternal order of nature, rightly fitted and abilitated to make uſe of the vocal power of language, which compriſes that of characters, orthography, grammar and logic, all which muſt have been made uſe of, in communicating a ſuppoſed revelation to mankind: which forecloſes inſpiration.

We will however premiſe that the chriſtian revelation was of divine authority originally, and communicated or revealed to its firſt promulgators in an intelligible method of ſpeech, and that the ſubject-matter thereof was wiſely adapted to their capacity of ſenſe and reaſon; in this caſe there would have been the ſame liability of miſunderſtanding it, as of perſon's miſunderſtanding another. When we hear any public diſcourſe, but few of us have a memory to repeat or write it ſo perfectly that any conſiderable part would agree with the original. I conclude that

I could not underſtand a revelation thus dictated to me in a vocal manner, ſo as to communicate it to others with any tolerable exactneſs, except it were ſpoken to me in diſtinct ſentences, and I had, as I now have, my pen in hand, and ſo wrote one ſentence firſt, and then have another ſpoken to me, and write that down, and ſo on until I had written the whole; and furthermore, provided I ſhould make any miſtake in writing the ſeveral parts of it, that the dictating voice ſhould notify me of it, and how to rectify it, and ſo on thoughout the volume; and provided, I ſhould act the impoſtor in writing any part of it agreeable to my own notions and deſigns, that the heavenly dictating intelligencer, by a voice and proper language, ſhould apprize thoſe of it, upon whom I might otherwiſe impoſe, and whom I might delude with my own inventions, inſtead of God's revelation. Furthermore, this heavenly dictating voice ſhould have been accommodated to all languages, grammars and logical ways of ſpeaking, in which a revelation may have been divulged, as it would be needful to have been continued from the beginning to every receiver, compiler, tranſlator, printer, commentator on, and teacher of ſuch a revelation, in order to have informed mankind in every inſtance, wherein at any time they may have been impoſed upon by any ſpurious adulterations or interpolations, and how it was in the original. Theſe, with the refinements of languages and tranſlations, are a ſummary of the many ways, wherein we may have been deceived, by giving credit to antiquated written revelation, which would need a ſeries of miracles to promulgate and perpetuate it in the world free from miſtakes and frauds of one kind or other, which leads me to the conſideration of the doctrine of miracles.

Chapter VII.

SECTION I.

OF MIRACLES.

PREVIOUS to the arguments concerning Miracles, it is requiſite that we give a diffinition of them, that the arguments may be clearly oppoſed to the doctrine of miracles, the reality of which we mean to negative; ſo that we do not diſpute about matters in which we are all agreed, but that we may direct our ſpeculations to the ſubject matter or eſſence of the controverſy.

We will therefore premiſe, that miracles are oppoſed to, and counteract the laws of nature, or that they imply an abſolute alteration in either a greater or leſs degree, in the eternal order, diſpoſition and tendency of it; this, we conclude, is a juſt diffinition of miraculouſneſs, and is that for which the advocates for miracles contend, in their defining of miracles. For if they were ſuppoſed to make no alteration in the natural order of things, they could have no poſſitive exiſtence, but the laws of nature would produce their effects, which would preclude their reality, and render them altogether fictitious, inaſmuch as their very exiſtence is premiſed to conſiſt in their oppoſition to, and alteration of the laws of nature: ſo that if this is not effected, miracles can have no poſſitive exiſtence, any more than nonentity itſelf. Therefore, if in the courſe of the ſucceeding arguments, we ſhould evince that the laws of nature have not and cannot be perverted, altered or ſuſpended, it will foreclose miracles by making all things natural. Having thus defined miracles, and ſtated the diſpute, we proceed to the arguments.

Should there ever have been a miraculous ſuſpenſion and alteration of the laws of nature, God muſt have been the immediate author of it, as no finite beings may be ſuppoſed to be able to alter thoſe laws or regulations, which were eſtabliſhed by omnipotent power and infinite perfection, and which nothing ſhort of ſuch power and perfection can perpetuate. This then is the ſingle point at iſſue, *viz*; whether God has, or can, conſiſtent with his nature as God, in any inſtance whatever, alter or deviate from the laws, with which he has eternally impreſſed the univerſe, or not, To ſuppoſe that God ſhould ſubvert his laws, (which is the ſame as changing them) would be to ſuppoſe him to be mutable; for that it would neceſſarily imply, either that their eternal eſtabliſhment was imperfect; or that a premiſed alteration thereof is ſo. To alter or change that which is abſolutely perfect, would neceſſarily make it ceaſe to be perfect, inaſmuch as perfection could not be altered for the better, but for the worſe; and conſequently an alteration could not meet with the divine approbation; which terminates the iſſue of the matter in queſtion againſt miracles, and authorizes us to deduce the following concluſive inference, *to wit*; that Almighty God, having eternally impreſſed the univerſe with a certain ſyſtem of laws, for the ſame eternal reaſon that they were infinitely perfect and beſt, they could never admit of the leaſt alteration, but are as unchangeable, in their nature, as God their immutable author. To form the fore going argument into ſyllogiſms, it would be thus:

God is perfect,
The laws of nature were eſtabliſhed by GOD;
Therefore, The laws of nature are perfect.

But admiting miracles, the ſyllogiſm ſhould be thus:

The LAWS of NATURE were in their eternal eſtabliſhment PERFCT;

The LAWS of NATURE have *been altered*;

Therefore, The *alteration* of the LAWS of NATURE is IMPERFECT.

Or thus; The LAWS of NATURE have been *altered*.

The *alteration* has been for the BETTER;

Therefore, The ETERNAL ESTABLISHMENT thereof was IMPERFECT.

Thus it appears, from a ſyllogiſtical as well as other methods of reaſoning, that provided we admit of Miracles, which are ſynonimous to the alterations of nature, we by ſo doing derogate from the perfection of God, either in his eternal conſtitution of nature, or in a ſuppoſed ſubſequent miraculous alteration of it, ſo that take the argument either way, and it preponderates againſt miracles.

FURTHERMORE, was it poſſible, that the eternal order of nature ſhould have been imperfect, there would be an end to all perfection. For God might be as imperfect in any ſuppoſed miraculous works, as in thoſe of nature; nor could we ever have any ſecurity under his natural or moral government, if ſo be that they were liable to change; for mutability is but another term for imperfection, or is inſeperably connected with it.

WAS the order of nature to change, the great improvements which have been made in learning and ſcience, would be nullified, in the ſame proportion as the laws of nature may be ſuppoſed to be changed; and the great diſcoveries of Sir Iſaac Newton and others, in aſtronomy; and their former wiſe calculations therein, (as far as miracles may be admited) would be loſt to the world in conſequence thereof; ſo that, on the poſition of miracles, the ſtudy or knowledge of nature, would be confounded, by new and diverſe impreſſions ſuppreſſing the eternal harmony of nature with ſubſequent irregularities: in which caſe we could have but little to do with learning or knowledge, but might figure about the world under awful apprehenſions of God's providence, expecting that world will cruſh upon world, or that the tail of the next comet will ſet this world on fire; and be conſtantly looking out for new and unnatural phenomena, and wild and romantic appearances; as in fact the ſuperſtitious part of the world do at preſent, for want of a right underſtanding of God and of his providence. Nor would the idea of a premiſed eternal imperfection be confined to the natural world only, but would equally affect the moral world, and ſap the foundation of moral good and evil: Some part of mankind, in conſequence thereof, might be elected to eternal favour,

vour, and others doomed to eternal perdition, and many other ſuch like chimerical conjectures might take place, were we not thoroughly guarded by eternal and perfect reaſon:

God, the great architect of nature, has ſo conſtructed its machinery, that it never needs to be altered or rectified. In vain we endeavour to ſearch out the hidden miſtery of a perpetual motion, in order to copy nature, for after all our reſearches we muſt be contented with ſuch machaniſm as will run down, and need rectification again; but the machine of the univerſe admits of no rectification, but continues its never ceaſing operations, under the unerring guidance of the providence of God. Human architects make and unmake things, and alter them as their invention may dictate, and experience may determine to be moſt convenient and beſt. But that mind, which is infinitely perfect, gains nothing by experience, but ſurveys the immenſe univerſality of things, with all their poſſible relations, fitneſſes and unfitneſſes, of both a natural or moral kind, with one comprehenſive view.

To ſuppoſe any ſucceſſion of knowledge in God would be to conceive of him to be finite, as there can be no addition of knowledge (which is the ſame as ſucceſſion of it) to that which is perfect, or infinite; therefore, there could not have been a ſubſequent reaſon in the divine mind, as a cauſe of any alteration in his works, or order of nature, providence or moral government. For his omniſcience muſt have eternally comprehended the whole, and his omnipotent power regulated all things accordingly, nor could there poſſibly have been any more ſucceſſion in the diſplay or exertion of the power of God, than in the exertion of his omniſcience. Inaſmuch as a ſucceſſion in the knowledge or power of God would be incompatable with his abſolute perfection, and diveſt him of his natural attributes; from hence we infer, that as the divine mind cannot admit of ſucceſſion or addition of knowledge, and as there can be no ſucceſſion, or addition, of the diſplay of omnipotent power, there can be no new idea to the former, or new exertion of the latter; and conſequently no miraculous exertion in the ſyſtem of the univerſe.

SECTION II.

A ſucceſſion of Knowledge, or of the exertion of Power in God, incompatible with his OMNISCIENCE *or* OMNIPOTENCE, *and the* ETERNAL *and* INFINITE DISPLAY *of* DIVINE POWER, *forecloſes any ſubſequent Exertion of it* MIRACULOUSLY.

THAT creation is as eternal and infinite as God, has been argued in chapter ſecond; and that there could be no ſucceſſion in creation, or the exertion of the power of God, in perfecting the boundleſs work, and in impreſſing the univerſe with harmonious laws, perfectly well adapted to their deſign, uſe and end.

Firſt. Theſe arguments may be further illuſtrated, and the evidence of the being of a God more fully exhibited, from the following conſiderations, *to wit.* Dependent beings and exiſtences muſt be dependent on ſome being or cauſe that is independent; for dependent beings, or exiſtences, could not exiſt independently: And, in as much as by retroſpectively tracing the order of the ſucceſſion of cauſes, we cannot include in our numeration the independent cauſe, as the ſeveral ſucceſſive cauſes ſtill depend on their preceeding cauſe, and that preceeding cauſe on the cauſe preceeding it, and ſo on beyond numerical tical calculations, we are therefore obliged (as rational beings) to admit an independent cauſe of all things, for that a mere ſucceſſion of dependent cauſes cannot conſtitute an independent cauſe: and from hence we are obliged to admit a ſelf-exiſtent and ſufficient cauſe of all things, for otherwiſe it would be dependent and inſufficient to have given exiſtence to itſelf, or to have been the efficient cauſe of all things.

HAVING thus eſtabliſhed the doctrine of a ſelf-ſufficient, ſelf-exiſtent, and conſequently all-powerful cauſe of all things, we aſcribe an eternal exiſtence to this cauſe of all cauſes and effects, whom we call God. And inaſmuch, as from the works of nature it is manifeſt, that God is poſſeſſed of almighty power, we from hence infer his eternal exiſtence: Since his premiſed exiſtence at (and not before) any given æra, would be a concluſive objection to the omnipotency of his power, that he had not exiſted before, or eternally. For as God is a being ſelf-ſufficient, ſelf-exiſtent, and almighty, (as before argued) his power muſt apply to his own exiſtence as well as to the exiſtence of things in general, and therefore, if he did not eternally exiſt, it muſt be becauſe he had not the almighty power of exiſtence in himſelf, and if ſo, he never could have exiſted at all; ſo that God muſt have eternally exiſted or not have exiſted at all; and inaſmuch as the works of nature evince his poſitive exiſtence and as he could not be dependent on the power, will, or pleaſure of any other being but himſelf, for his exiſtence, and as an exiſtence in time, would be a contradiction to his almighty power of ſelf-exiſttency, that he had not eternally exiſted; therefore, his exiſtence muſt have been (in truth) eternal.

Although it is to us incomprehenſible that any being could be ſelf-exiſtent or eternal (which is ſynonimous) yet we can comprehend, that any being that is not ſelf-exiſtent and eternal is dependent and finite, and conſequently not a God. Hence we infer, that though we cannot comprehend the true God (by reaſon of our own finiteneſs) yet we can negatively comprehend that an imperfect being cannot be God. A dependent being is finite, and therefore imperfect, and conſequently not a God. A being that has exiſted at a certain æra (and not before) is a limited one, for beyond his æra he was not, and therefore finite, and conſequently not a God. Therefore, that being only who is ſelf-exiſtent, infinitely perfect and eternal, is the true God: and if eternally and infinitely perfect, there muſt have been an eternal and infinite diſplay, and if an eternal and infinite diſplay, it could be nothing ſhort of an eternal and infinite creation and providence.

For the illuſtration of this doctrine, we will premiſe the exiſtence of a God near ſix thouſand years old (according to Moſes's Æra of creation) and compare the idea of the exiſtence of ſuch an imaginary being, with another imaginary God, who has exiſted, as the Chineſian Chronologiſt would have it, more than forty thouſand years. Now I query, from a comparative idea of the exiſtence of theſe premiſed deities, whether the longeſt exiſtence of the two does not diſplay the moſt extenſive and greateſt power of exiſtence and government, and if ſo, a longer period of the exiſtence and government of a premiſed God, would ſtill diſplay more power, and ſo on throughout human numeration, and finally, an eternal exiſtence, creation and providence of a God, would eternally excell and ſurpaſs all other conception of a God, and therefore points out to us the true God: And ſince God is eternal and abſolutely perfect in all poſſible perfection, and poſſeſſed of eternal and infinite power; the power of creation and providence, and of ſuſtaining the ſame, muſt have been eternal with God, and conſequently, could not have failed of eternally producing their effects, which we perceive to be verified, in the creation, regulation, and ſupport, of ſuch part of the univerſe as comes within our knowledge.

THIS doctrine of eternal creation and providence, naturally and neceſſarily reſults from the doctrine of the eternal ſelf-exiſtency, omnipotent power and perfection of God; and is ſo forcible to a rational and improved mind, that it could not fail of gaining the aſſent of the learned in Chriſtendom, were it not for prepoſſeſſion in favor of Moſes's theology, which repreſents creation to have had a beginning and is ſilent reſpecting the eternity and infinity of God; the earlieſt account he gives us of him was in his ſix days work, and that on the "ſeventh day" he "*reſted* from all his work which" he "had created and made" from this it appears, that the ſix days work, which included the creation, of "the heavens and the earth" compriſed God's creation, and that he bounded the limit of his empire by its circumference, for there is not any thing more evident, than that previous to creation, or beyond its circumference, there could have been no diſplay of creation or providence; and as to the exiſtence of a God, previous to Moſes's æra of the firſt day's work, he does not inform us. The firſt notice he gives us of a God was of his laborious working by the day, a theory of creation (as I ſhou'd think) better calculated for the ſervile Iſraelitiſh *Brick-makers* than for men of learning and ſcience in theſe modern times.

We ſhall now proceed to the further inveſtigation of the order of nature and diſprove miracles. Should we admit, that God has countermanded any of his laws, and given nature a different bias or tendency, by a miraculous exertion or interpoſition of his power, ſince its eſtabliſhment, it would not only evince an imperfection in God, either in his eternal conſtitution of things, or in his ſuppoſed ſubſequent miraculous alteration of the Laws of Nature, as before argued, but would be contrary to our grand poſition, that the power of God is not and cannot be exerciſed by ſucceſſion or degrees, for ſuch an exertion of power would agree with the exerciſe of it amongſt men, and be altogether inadequate to the omnipotent and immenſe work of creation.

A successive creation had it been continued from any given time forever, could never have completed the boundleſs work, but it would forever remain a bounded thing; which is the ſame as to conſiſt of a circumference, beyond which a progreſſive exertion of power could not extend the amplitude of creation; and therefore a progreſſive creation could not be immenſe: For ſucceſſion cannot extend to infinitude. But as God was eternal and infinitely omnipreſent, his almighty exertion of creation and harmonizing nature, was eternally every where, which eternally and immenſely gave being and order to the univerſe, not by ſucceſſion of time, or addition of parts. And being thus eternally compleat, it was impoſſible that the act of creation and regulation of nature, could ever be repeated or acted again. Inaſmuch as there was an eternal and infinite plenitude and harmony of things, nothing could be added to, or diminiſhed from this perfect ſyſtem of things, which we call nature. And though the omnipotent and perfectly wiſe, juſt, and gracious exertion of God, in creating and regulating nature, could not be by ſucceſſion, or acted but once, yet nature, with all its productions or formations, is ſuſtained by the ſame all-ſufficient God, who eternally gave being and harmony to it. Nor is it neceſſary or poſſible, that there ever ſhould have been any other immediate exertion of infinite power, than in the creation, regulation and ſuſtaining the univerſe, agreeable to its eternal order, which has been one eternal and infinite exertion of God. Nor could the exertion of the divine power, in ſuſtaining the univerſe, exert itſelf by ſucceſſion, any more than in creation, or in the regulation of nature. For the ſuſtaining power muſt be co-extenſive with the nature of things, which are immenſe, and therefore cannot admit of ſucceſſion in its operation or exertion; inaſmuch as a progreſſive exertion of it could not be infinite,

finite, and conſequently could not extend to the preſervation or upholding of the infinitude of things. From hence we infer, that the creation and harmony of the univerſe, with its immenſe fulneſs, and the ſuſtaining of it agreeable to its eternal laws, was the eternal, infinite and immediate act of almighty God. But the productions of nature, which are the reſult of the energy of the eternal laws of its eſtabliſhment, are not the immediate acts of God, but rather mediate, as they pertain to the vaſt productions of natural cauſes, and are cauſed by the mutual co-operation of the effects of the eternal cauſe, on each other; not by the immediate agency of God himſelf, but by the intervention and co-operation of intermediate cauſes on each other, producing others, and ſo on agreeable to the ſeries of nature's operations, which we call the mediate agency of God; as they are the reſult of the operations of nature. But theſe gradations of cauſes and their effects, reſulting therefrom, are dependent on the eternal laws of nature, and thoſe eternal laws dependent on the immediate agency of God who upholds them.

Thus God created the univerſe, and imparted order and decorum to it, and ſuſtains it by the infinite and immediate agency of his power; this comprehends all the immediate agency of God: For all the productions of nature are only the action of bodies on bodies, or of things on things, and are the mere reſult of the eternal laws of nature, which we call natural cauſes, and are the mediate acts of God. It is the want of a right underſtanding of the divine agency, which makes us imagine that the ſeries of nature's operations, that fall under our notice, is the immediate exertion of God; which is rather the mediate effect of his power and goodneſs, that conſtitutes his providence, and being truly natural, is conſequently not miraculous.

WORDS cannot expreſs our ideas exactly as they are in our own minds, eſpecially in abſtruſe reaſonings. It is very difficult or impoſſible, in deſcribing the infinity of creation, and the harmony and upholding of it, or its eternity, to do it in ſuch a manner, as to give the reader the true idea of the writer; which difficulty may lead the reader inadvertently to conclude, that thoſe exertions of God are ſo many diſtinct and ſeperate actions; as firſt, the eternal act of creation; and ſecondly, that to inveſt it with harmony or order was another, and that to impart to both a ſuſtaining power, would be a third ſucceſſive act of God; which,in the nature of the things themſelves can not be true: For the divine act of ſuſtaining the univerſe, muſt have been co eternal and co-extenſive with that of creation, or creation could not have exiſted until the premiſed progreſſion of the act of ſuſtaining it may be ſuppoſed to have taken place; which would have defeated or rendered the premiſed ſucceeding act of ſuſtaining the creation uſeleſs and impoſſible: For creation muſt have vaniſhed, or ceaſed to be, had not the act of ſuſtaining it been co-eternal and co-extenſive with creation itſelf.

And furthermore, to ſuppoſe a ſucceſſion in the divine exertion of creation and imparting harmony to the creation, would neceſſarily imply a beginning in the act of harmony, and if ſo, there muſt have been an eternity preceding ſuch beginning to harmonize creation, in which eternity, creation muſt have exiſted in chaos, which precludes a providence, until order took place. From all which we infer, that there was not and could not be any ſucceſſion, in the act of almighty God, in creating, ſuſtaining and regulating the univerſe, but that it was eternal and co-extenſive with the infinitude of things. For God never did or can do, but one ſimple and uncompounded act, which is as eternal and infinite as God. For that the infinite all-comprehending mind can admit of no additional knowledge or ſucceſſion of ideas, or the exertion of infinite, all-comprehending power, admit of addition or ſucceſſion of power. For all manner of ſucceſſion or increaſe of power is finite, as the ſucceſſion of ideas, applied to knowledge makes it to be; and as there can be no ſucceſſion in the immediate exertion of the act of omnipotent power, there never could be a new exertion of it, and therefore no miracle.

THAT a ſucceſſive creation muſt have been a limited or finite one, has been argued at large in the ſecond chapter. Provided there has been a ſucceſſion in the work of creation, one part of it muſt have ſucceeded another progreſſively, and have been done in certain limited operations, viz. days-works, &c. and comprized as many local parts of creation, which added together, would make but a local whole: ſo that immenſity could not be repleted by a ſucceſſive creation. The ſame is true of a premiſed progreſſive exertion of the divine power in imparting laws, which is the ſame as harmony to it. So alſo in the act of ſuſtaining the univerſe, it could no more be progreſſive in its exertion than either of the former; for ſucceſſion is but the ſame, whether applied to the creation, regulation, or ſuſtaining of the univerſe. In every of theſe caſes, the creating, regulating or ſuſtaining power muſt have been immenſe, and immenſity the unlimited diſplay of it; and it is but trifling to ſuppoſe, that ſucceſſion or progreſſion of the exertion of power, can extend to infinitude, for the greateſt poſſible addition, of the greateſt numerical parts, or the moſt rapid motion, or any thing of which we can conceive, cannot comprize that which is numberleſs, boundleſs, or infinite.

SECTION III.

That which we underſtand is NATURAL, *and that which we underſtand not we cannot underſtand to be* MIRACULOUS.

THOUGH the immediate act of God cannot be progreſſive, or operate by ſucceſſion, nevertheleſs ſucceſſion is eſſential to the actions or operations of natural cauſes, which come within our comprehenſion, and is the very ſource out of which time itſelf with us originated, which is computed from the movements and periodical revolutions of the orbs of our ſolar ſyſtem, thoſe worlds of motion which conſtitute our ſeaſons, with other revolutions immaterial to our preſent purpoſe to mention. Furthermore, we compute time from nativities, deaths, and remarkable epochas as, revolutions of governments and ſtates, and from the productions and diſſolutions of animals and vegetables, *as* the age of a man, of an elephant, or a plant, or from the period of the revolution of the planets or comets.

THUS it is that thoſe cauſes and effects, which are produced in time, have their reſpective periods and terminations, and operate by ſucceſſion of ſeconds, minutes, hours, days, years, centuries, or other parts of duration. But that which is not ſubject to revolution, change, alteration, ſucceſſion or progreſſion, as the immediate act of God is not, cannot be computed by time, for that, which is immediate, and without ſucceſſion, takes no time in its performance; as was eternally the caſe reſpecting the immediate act of God, in creating, regulating and ſuſtaining nature; for it was perfectly inſtantaneous, or it could never have been effected at all as has been already argued. But thoſe things, that are done or produced mediately; *to wit*, by natural cauſes, are ſubject to the order of an eternal ſeries of viciſſitudes and changes, for that they are the acts or effects of the operations of created beings, or the effects of the operation of matter on matter, or of ſenſation on mental and cogitative beings. All forms are indebted to creation for their exiſtence, as mere creation unites with, or compoſes all poſſible forms ; ſo that all the productions of nature, animate or inanimate, are no more than the production of forms, and their decay and diſſolution is no more, than the diſſolution of forms, and neither adds to nor diminiſhes from creation, but are reduced to their original elements again, which by the energy of the laws of nature are changed into new and diverſe forms, and thus perpetuate their alternate and never ceaſing rounds : ſo that the particles of matter which compoſe my body, may have exiſted in more millions of different forms than I am able to enumerate, and is ſtill liable to fluctuations equally numerous. And though this elementary, fluxility of matter, which is mere creation, is as eternal as God, and its duration immenſurable by the fleeting moments of time, yet the reſpective particular productions, from the eternal elementary maſs of creation, which fall under our notice, have their periodical duration, and before they mix with the immenſe maſs, are capable of being calculated, inaſmuch as they are the production of natural cauſes, and have a beginning and an end. But the eternal maſs, having neither beginning nor end, cannot come within our calculation of time, for that it is eternal ; nor are we able to enumerate the ſeries of nature's operations or productions, for the ſame reaſon that they alſo are eternal.

We can underſtand the order of time, and comprehend the application of it to finite and limited exiſtences, or periods of duration; but as applied to duration without beginning or end, or to that which is boundleſs or endleſs, or to an eternal ſeries of cauſes and events, our mathematical problems and calculations fail us, and all our conceptions are ſwallowed up and loſt in immenſity.

We are not only confounded in our ſpeculations on that which is eternal and infinite, but alſo in that part of the ſeries of nature's operations, which comes under our notice, and conſequently conſideration; their relations, connections, diſpoſitions and eſſences, are in a great meaſure beyond our comprehenſion, but not altogether unknown to us: for was it ſo, our ſpeculations could not extend to them. Thoſe things in nature which we do underſtand, are not miraculous to us, and thoſe things which we do not underſtand, we cannot with any propriety adjudge to be miraculous. Were we to determine every thing to be miraculous, which we cannot comprehend to be natural, or underſtand the reaſon of, our ignorance of nature would, of neceſſary conſequence, determine moſt things to be miraculous.

That God has conſtituted the nature of things, univerſal, will not be diſputed, and that ſhould he alter them, it would imply mutability in him, has been fully evinced, which militates againſt miracles. How then is it poſſible, that we can have an evidence of a miracle, ſince thoſe things, whereof we underſtand the natural reaſons, are not miraculous, and the things we underſtand not, we cannot comprehend to be miraculous? But admitting we ever attain to the knowledge of the premiſed miraculous alterations of nature, it muſt be reſpecting ſome particular things in nature, which we thoroughly comprehend to be natural, and which, by a countermanding power, may be ſuppoſed to be inverted, and that we have a certain knowledge, not only that the laws of nature reſpecting them are ſuſpended, but that they are ſuperceeded by new ones, oppoſed to, and different from the former. All this we muſt fully comprehend, before we can have any evidence of a miracle. But to be ſo perfectly acquainted with the knowledge of nature, as to know its contrary impreſſions, and diſtinguiſh them from the natural, would be difficult or impoſſible to the greateſt philoſophers of the age, and wholly exceed the comprehenſion of ignorant people, who are moſt fond of miracles.

SECTION IV.

Rare and wonderful Phenomenæ no evidence of MIRACLES, *nor are diabolical Spirits able to effect them, or ſuperſtitious Traditions to confirm them, nor can ancient* MIRACLES *prove recent* REVELATIONS.

COMETS, earthquakes, volcanoes and nothern-lights (in the night) with many other extraordinary phenomenæ or appearances, intimidate weak minds, and are by them thought to be miraculous; although they undoubtedly have their proper or adequate natural cauſes, which have been in a great meaſure diſcovered. Jack-with-a-lanthorn is a frightful appearance to ſome people, but not ſo much as the imaginary ſpectre. But of all the ſcarecrows, which have made human nature tremble, the Devil has been chief; his family is ſaid to be very numerous, conſiſting of "Legions," with which he has kept our world in a terrible uproar. To tell of all the feats and diabolical tricks, which this infernal family is ſaid to have played upon our race, would compoſe a volume of an enormous ſize. All the magicians, necromancers, wizards, witches, conjurers, gypſies, ſybils, hobgoblins, apparitions and the like, are ſuppoſed to be under their diabolical government: old Belzebub rules them all. Men will face deſtructive cannon and mortars, engage each other in the claſhing of arms, and meet the horrors of war undaunted, but the devil and his banditti of fiends and emiſſaries fright them out of their wits, and have a powerful influence in plunging them into ſuperſtition, and in continuing them therein.

THIS ſuppoſed intercourſe between mankind and thoſe infernal beings, is by ſome thought to be miraculous or ſupernatural; while others laugh at all the ſtories of their exiſtence, concluding them to be mere juggle and deception, craftily impoſed on the credulous, who are always gaping after ſomething marvellous, miraculous, or ſupernatural, or after that which they do not underſtand; and are aukward and unſkilful in their examination into nature, or into the truth or reality of things, which is occaſioned partly by natural imbecility, and partly by indolence and inattention to nature and reaſon.

THAT any magical intercourſe or correſpondence of mere ſpirits with mankind, is contradictory to nature, and conſequently impoſſible, has been argued in chapter ſixth. And that nothing ſhort of the omnipotent power of God, countermanding his eternal order of nature, and impreſſing it with new and contrary laws, can conſtitute a miracle has been argued in this, and is an effect ſurpaſſing the power of mere creatures, the diabolical nature not excepted. From hence we infer, that Devils cannot work miracles. Inattention to reaſon, and ignorance of the nature of things makes many of mankind give credit to Miracles. It ſeems that by this marvellous way of accounting for things, they think to come off with reputation in their ignorance; for if nature was nothing but a ſupernatural whirligig, or an inconſtant and irregular piece of mechaniſm, it would reduce all learning and ſcience to a level, with the fanaticiſm and ſuperſtition of the weak and credulous, and put the wiſe and unwiſe on a level in point of knowledge, as there would not, on this theſis, be any regular ſtandard in nature, whereby to aſcertain the truth and reality of things. What is called ſlight of hand, is by ſome people thought to be miraculous. Aſtrological calculations of nativities, lucky and unlucky days and ſeaſons, are by ſome regarded, and even moles on the ſurface of the ſkin are thought to be portentive of good or bad fortune.

" The Sweediſh Laplanders, the moſt ignorant mortals in" Europe, " are charged with being conjurors, and are ſaid to have done ſuch feats, by the magic art, as do not at all fall ſhort of miracles; that they will give the ſailors ſuch winds as they want in any part of their voyage; that they can inflict and cure diſeaſes at any diſtance; and inſure people of ſucceſs in their undertakings: and yet they are juſt ſuch poor, miſerable wretches as uſed to be charged with witchcraft here," viz. in England and in New England, "and cannot command ſo much as the neceſſaries of life; and indeed, none but very credulous and ignorant people give credit to ſuch fables at this day, though the whole world ſeems to have been bewitched in believing them formerly." "The 24th of March, 1735, an act paſſed in the parliament of Great-Britain to repeal the ſtatute of 1 *Jac*'s, intitled an act againſt conjuration, witchcraft, and dealing with evil and wicked ſpirits, and to repeal an act paſſed in Scotland intitled Anentis Witchcraft." It is but forty-ſix years ſince the ſupreme legiſlature of Great Britain became apprized of the natural impoſſibility of any magical intercourſe between mankind and evil and wicked ſpirits; in conſequence whereof they repealed their ſtatute laws againſt it, as they were naturally void, unneceſſary, and unworthy of their legiſlative reſtriction. For that ſuch a crime had no poſſible exiſtence in nature, and therefore could not be acted by mankind; though previous to the repeal of thoſe laws, more or leſs of the ſpecies of that iſland had fallen a ſacrifice to them; and the relations of thoſe imaginary criminals were ſtamped with infamy by ſuch executions, which had the ſanction of law, *alias* of the legiſlature and the judges, and in which many learned attornies have demonſtrated the turpitude of ſuch capital offences, and the juſt ſanction of thoſe laws in extirpating ſuch peſts of ſociety from the earth; to which the clergy have likewiſe given their approbation, for that thoſe capital tranſgreſſors made too free with their Devils.

FURTHERMORE, the repeal of thoſe laws, as far as the wiſdom and authority of the Britiſh Parliament may be ſuppoſed to go, abrogated that paragraph of the law of Moſes, which ſaith "thou ſhalt not ſuffer a witch to live," and not only ſo, but the doctrine of the impoſſibility of intercourſe, or of dealing with wicked ſpirits, forecloſes the ſuppoſed miraculous caſting out of Devils; of which we have ſundry chronicles in the New-Teſtament.

BUT to return to the annals of my own country, it will preſent us with a ſcene of ſuperſtition in the magical way, which will probably equal any that is to be met with in hiſtory, *to wit*; The Salem witchcraft in New England; great numbers of the inhabitants of both ſexes were judicially convicted of being Wizards and Witches, and executed accordingly; ſome of whom were ſo infatuated with the deluſion, that at their execution they confeſſed themſelves guilty of the ſorcery, for which they were indicted; nor did the fanataciſm meet with a check until ſome of the firſt families where accuſed with it, who made ſuch an oppoſition to the proſecutions, as finally put an end to any further execution of the Salemites.

THOSE capital offenders ſuffered in conſequence of certain laws, which, by way of deriſion, have ſince been called the *Blue Laws*, in conſequence of the multiplicity of ſuperſtition, with which they abounded, moſt of which are repealed; but thoſe that reſpect ſorcery have had favorite legiſlators enough to keep them alive and in force to this day.

I RECOLLECT an account of prodigies ſaid to have been carrying on by the Romiſh Clergy in France, upon which his moſt chriſtian majeſty ſent one of his officers to them, with the following prohibition, *to wit*; "by the command of the King, God is forbid to work any more miracles in this place;" upon which the marvellous work ceaſed.

There has been ſo much detection of the artifice, juggle and impoſture of the pretenders to miracles, in the world, eſpecially in ſuch parts where learning and ſcience have prevailed, that it ſhould prompt us to be very ſuſpicious of the reality of them; even without entering into any lengthy arguments from the reaſon and nature of things to evince the utter impoſſibility of their exiſtence in the creation and providence of God.

We are told, that the firſt occaſion and introduction of miracles into the world, was to prove the divine authority of revelation, and the miſſion of its firſt teachers; be it ſo; upon this plan of evincing the divinity of revelation, it would be neceſſary that its teachers ſhould always be veſted with the power of working miracles; ſo that when their authority or the infallibility of the revelation which they ſhould teach, ſhould at any time be queſtioned, they might work a miracle; or that in ſuch a caſe God would do it; which would end the diſpute, provided mankind were ſuppoſed to be judges of miracles which may be controverted. However, admitting that they are poſſible, and mankind in the ſeveral generations of the world to be adequate judges of them, and alſo that they were neceſſary to ſupport the divine miſſion of the firſt promulgators of revelation, and the divinity which they taught; from the ſame parity of reaſoning miracles ought to be continued to the ſucceeding generations of mankind, co-extenſive with its divine authority, or that of its teachers. For why ſhould we in this age of the world be under obligation to believe the infallibility of revelation, or the heavenly miſſion of its teachers, upon leſs evidence than thoſe of mankind who lived in the generations before us? For that which may be ſuppoſed to be a rational evidence, and worthy to gain the belief and aſſent of mankind at one period of time, muſt be ſo at another; ſo that it appears, from the ſequel of the arguments on this ſubject, that provided miracles were requiſite to eſtabliſh the divine authority of revelation originally, it is equally requiſite that they be continued to the lateſt poſterity, to whom the divine legiſlator may be ſuppoſed to continue ſuch revelation as his law to mankind.

Furthermore, ſhould we admit the divine miſſion and authority of the firſt promulgators of revelation, and the reality of the miracles they wrought, or that God may be ſuppoſed to have wrought, as a confirmation of the revelation they then promulgated; yet we cannot for certain determine but that their ſucceſſors have ſince corrupted it, and altered it to anſwer their own ſiniſter deſigns, and thereby provoked God to withdraw from them the power of working miracles, or to have ceaſed to work miracles himſelf, to the intent that they might not obtrude ſpurious revelations on mankind. For any miraculous works, which may be premiſed to have been anciently wrought,to evince the divine authority of the firſt manuſcript copies of revelation can bear no teſtimony to revelation, as we have it according to the preſent tranſlation, or to the divine miſſion of the preſent clergy. Though admitting miracles to have been wrought in the primitive times of the promulgation of revelation, for its then ſupport, and the ſupport of the religion they then taught, it would have been evidential of the divine miſſion of its firſt promulgators, but theſe are matters of ſpeculation to us, and particularly concerned thoſe ages in which revelation may be ſuppoſed to have been taught in its purity, and confirmed by miracles ; as they ſuppoſed, who were the firſt converts to it, and who are ſaid to have ſeen and believed ; and when this generation is favoured with a miraculous confirmation of the divine miſſion of our preſent clergy, and of the authenticity of our preſent revelation, as it has been handed down to us though the complicated revolutions of the world, and the viciſſitudes of human learning, by miracles wrought in open day light, not only of the ſun, but of learning and ſcience (the latter of which the primitive believers had not the advantage of) it will be early enough for us to ſubſcribe to the divine miſſion of the one, or divinity, or infallibility of the other.

Nothing is more evident to the underſtanding part of mankind, than that in thoſe parts of the world where learning and ſcience has prevailed, miracles have ceaſed; but in ſuch parts of it as are barbarous and ignorant, miracles are ſtill in vogue; which is of itſelf a ſtrong preſumption that in the infancy of letters, learning and ſcience, or in the world's non-age, thoſe who confided in miracles, as a proof of the divine miſſion of the firſt promulgators of revelation, were impoſed upon by fictitious appearances inſtead of miracles.

Furthermore, The author of Chriſtianity warns us againſt the impoſitions of falſe teachers, and deſcribes the ſigns of the true believers, ſaying " And theſe ſigns ſhall follow them that believe; in my name ſhall they caſt out devils, they ſhall ſpeak with new tongues, they ſhall take up ſerpents, and if they drink any deadly thing it ſhall not hurt them, they ſhall lay hands on the ſick and they ſhall recover." Theſe are the expreſs words of the founder of Chriſtianity, and are contained in the very commiſſion, which he gave to his eleven

ven Apoſtles, who were to promulgate his goſpel in the world; ſo that from their very inſtitution it appears, that when the miraculous ſigns, therein ſpoken of, failed, they were to be conſidered as unbelievers, and conſequently no faith or truſt to be any longer repoſed in them or their ſucceſſors. For theſe ſigns were thoſe which were to perpetuate their miſſion, and were to be continued as the only evidences of the validity and authenticity of it, and as long as theſe ſigns followed, mankind could not be deceived in adhearing to the doctrines which the Apoſtles and their ſucceſſors taught; but when the ſigns failed, their divine authority ended. Now if any of them will drink a doſe of deadly poiſon, which I could prepare, and it does not "hurt them," I will ſubſcribe to their divine authority, and end the diſpute; not that I have a diſpoſition to poiſon any one, nor do I ſuppoſe that they would dare to take ſuch a doſe as I could prepare for them, which, if ſo, would evince, that they were unbelievers themſelves, though they are extremely apt to cenſure others for unbelief which according to their ſcheme is a damnable ſin.

SECTION V

Miracles could not be inſtructive to mankind.

SHOULD we admit the intervention of Miracles, yet they could not enlarge our ideas of the power of God. For that to unmake nature univerſally, and to impreſs it with new and oppoſite laws from thoſe of its eternal eſtabliſhment, could require no greater exertion of power, than that which is Omnipotent, and which muſt have been exerted in the eternal creation, regulation and ſupport of the univerſe. But any ſuppoſed miraculous alteration of nature, muſt imply mutability in the wiſdom of God; and therefore is inadmiſſable. Should God miraculouſly raiſe a dead perſon to life again, would the reſtoring life argue a greater exertion of power in God than in firſt giving exiſtence to that life? ſurely it could not: From all which we infer, that miracles cannot inlarge our ideas of the power of God. We proceed next to enquire, what advantages could accrue to mankind by them in the way of teaching and inſtruction? For this muſt be the great end propoſed by them. That they cannot teach us any thing relative to the omnipotence of God, has been evinced; but that they militate againſt his wiſdom: and furthermore, that they cannot prove the divine authority of written revelation, or the miſſion of its reſpective teachers to any country, people or nation, any farther or longer than the miraculous works are actually continued, has been ſufficiently argued in the proceeding ſection. It remains farther to be conſidered, that they are incapable of inſtructing us in the ſubject-matter, doctrine, propoſition or inference of any premiſed written revelation; or of giving us any inſight into the precepts or injunctions thereof, or to communicate any ſort of intelligence or knowledge reſpecting its contents. The premiſed, ſudden and miraculous alterations of the common courſe of nature might aſtoniſh us; but ſuch alterations or changes, do not evince that they have any thing to do with us, or we with them in the way of teaching and inſtruction; for truth and falſehood, right and wrong, juſtice and injuſtice, virtue and vice, or moral good and evil are in their diſtinct natures diametrically oppoſite to each other, and neceſſarily and eternally will remain ſo to be, and that, independent of miracles or revealed religion. It is by reaſon we inveſtigate the knowledge of moral good and evil, it is that which lays us under a moral obligation, and it is not a miracle or revelation that can alter the moral rectitude of things, or prove that to be truth, which in its nature is not ſo. Therefore admitting ever ſo many miracles, and revelations, we ſhould ſtill have to recur to reaſon and argument, the old and only way of exploring truth and diſtinguiſhing it from falſhood, or underſtanding true religion from impoſture or error. For though miracles might evince the divine miſſion of the clergy, and the divinity of the chriſtian revelation, to us, were they in fact wrought in this enlightened age for that purpoſe, yet they are not calculated to expound or explain it, but would perplex and confound us, in our logical and doctrinal ſpeculations, nature and reaſon being oppoſed to them as before argued. Such ſuppoſed miraculous changes in nature, would to us be myſterious, and altogether unintelligible, and conſequently could not come within our deliberation on the right underſtanding, or comments on a ſuppoſed written revelation; the underſtanding of which, after all the buſtle about miracles, muſt be inveſtigated by reaſon: and revelation itſelf be either approved or diſapproved by it. From the foregoing reaſonings we infer, that miracles cannot be edifying or inſtructive to us; and though they are ſtrenuouſly urged as a proof of the divine legation of the firſt promulgators of revelation, and their ſucceſſors; nevertheleſs, where the premiſed miracles became extinct, their divine authority and the evidence of the infallibility of revelation, became extinct alſo.

SECTION VI.

Prayer cannot be attended with Miraculous Conſequences:

BEFORE we conclude our diſcourſe upon miracles, it will be requiſite that we conſider thoſe ſuppoſed miraculous alterations of nature, or of divine providence, which by ſome are thought to have taken place in the world, merely in conformity to the prayer of Man. The arguments, which have been already advanced againſt miracles, are in ſubſtance equally applicable, to ſuch as may be ſuppoſed to be effectuated by prayers, remonſtrances or ſupplications of finite beings. That God ſhould countermand his order of nature, which is the ſame thing as to alter his providence, merely in dictatorial conformity to the prayers or praiſes of his creatures, or that he ſhould alter it merely from motives from himſelf are not eſſentially different. In as much as the conſequence of a ſuppoſed alteration from either of the cauſes before mentioned would equally and neceſſarily imply mutability in wiſdom, in the one caſe, as in the other; for in both caſes the arguments terminate againſt any ſuppoſed miraculous alterations of nature or providence, merely from the conſideration of the immutable perfection of the divine nature. For a departure from, or alteration of the eternal order, or government of things would be equally derogatory from the abſolute perfection of God, whether thoſe alterations are ſuppoſed to take place merely in conformity to the prayers or remonſtrances of his creatures, or from reaſons, which may be ſuppoſed to have originated merely from the divine mind itſelf. There is no thing, which can be mentioned, that would more manifeſtly argue mutability in God, than that he ſhould alter his order of nature or providence to comply with the prayers of his mutable creatures; or to do that in conformity thereto, which the eternal regulation and government of nature would not have effectuated or accompliſhed independent of them. For if the eternal laws of nature were abſolutely perfect, which muſt be admitted, a deviation from, or countermanding of them, muſt unavoidably imply mutability and imperfection, be it from what cauſe it will.

SENSIBLY to depend upon God in and through his order of nature, to retain in our minds a grateful ſenſe of his providential goodneſs to us, to place in him our important hope of immortality, and to act and demean ourſelves under all circumſtances of life agreeable to reaſon, or the moral rectitude of things pointed out unto us thereby, is our indiſpenſible duty: it is enjoined by the laws of nature and ought to be taught and cultivated among mankind. But prayer to God is no part of a rational religion, nor did reaſon ever dictate it, but, was it duly attended to, it would teach us the contrary.

To make known our wants to God by prayer or to communicate any intelligence concerning ourſelves or the univerſe to him, is impoſſible, ſince his omniſcient mind has a perfect knowledge of all things, and therefore is beholden to none of our correſpondence to inform himſelf of our circumſtances, or of what would be wiſeſt and beſt to do for us in all poſſible conditions and modes of exiſtence, in our never ending duration of being. Theſe, with the infinitude of things, have been eternally deliberated by the omniſcient mind, who can admit of no additional intelligence, whether by prayer or otherwiſe, which renders it nugatory.

We ought to act up to the dignity of our nature, and demean ourſelves, as creatures of our rank and capacity in the order of Being ought to do, and not preſume to dictate any thing, leſs or more, to the governor of the univerſe; who rules not by our proſcriptions, but by eternal and infinite reaſon. To pray to God, or to make ſupplication to him, requeſting certain favors for ourſelves, or for any, or all the ſpecies, is inconſiſtent with the relation which ſubſiſts between God and man. Whoever has a juſt ſenſe of the abſolute perfection of God, and of their own imperfection, and natural ſubjection to his providence, cannot but from thence infer the impropriety of praying or ſupplicating to God, for this, that, or the other thing; or of remonſtrating againſt his providence; inaſmuch, as "*known to God are all our wants*;" and as we know, that we ourſelves are inadequate judges of what would be beſt for us, all things conſidered. God looks through the immenſity of things, and underſtands the harmony, moral beauty and decorum of the whole, and will by no means change his purpoſes, or alter the nature of the things themſelves for any of our intreaties or threats. To pray, intreat, or make ſupplication to God, is neither more nor leſs than dictating to Eternal Reaſon, and entering into the province and prerogative of the Almighty; if this is not the meaning and import of prayer, it has none at all, that extends to the final events and conſequences of things. To pray to God with a ſenſe, that the prayer we are making will not be granted any more for our making it, or that our prayer will make no alteration in the ſtate, order or diſpoſal of things at all, or that the requeſts, which we make, will be no more likely to be granted, or the things themſelves conferred upon us by God, than as though we had not prayed for them, would be ſtupidity or outright mockery, or "to be ſeen of men," in order to procure from them ſome temporary advantages. But on the other hand for us to ſuppoſe, that our prayers or praiſes do in any one inſtance or more alter the eternal conſtitution of things, or of the providence of God, is the ſame as to ſuppoſe ourſelves ſo far forth to hold a ſhare in the divine government, for our prayers muſt be ſuppoſed to effect ſomthing or nothing, if they effect nothing, they are good for nothing; but that they ſhould effect any alteration in the nature of things, or providence of God, is inadmiſſible: for if they did, we ſhould interfere with the providence of God in a certain degree, by arrogating it to ourſelves. For if there are any particulars in providence, which God does not govern by his order of nature, they do not belong to the providence of God, but of man; for if in any inſtance, God is moved by the prayers, intreaties, or ſupplications of his creatures, to alter his providence, or to do that in conformity thereto, which otherwiſe, in the courſe of hisprovidence, he would not have done; then it would neceſſarily follow, that as far as ſuch alteration may be ſuppoſed to take place, God does not govern by eternal and infinite reaſon, but on the conterary is governed himſelf by the prayer of man.

Our great proficients in prayer muſt need think themſelves to be of great importance in the ſcale of being, otherwiſe they would not indulge themſelves in the notion, that the God of nature would ſubvert his laws, or bend his providence in conformity to their prayers. But it may be objected, that they pray conditionally, *to wit*; that God would anſwer their prayers, provided they are agreeable to his providential order, or diſpoſal of things; but to conſider prayer in ſuch a ſenſe renders it, not only uſeleſs, but impertinent; for the laws of nature would produce their natural effects as well without it, as with it. The ſum total of ſuch conditional prayer could amount to no more than this, *to wit*; that God would not regard them at all, but that he would conduct the kingdom of his providence agreeable to the abſolute perfections of his nature; and who in the exerciſe of common ſenſe would imagine that God would do otherwiſe?

The nature of the immenſe univerſality of things having been eternally adjuſted, conſtituted and ſettled, by the profound thought, perfect wiſdom, impartial juſtice, immenſe goodneſs, and omnipotent power of God, it is the greateſt arrogance in us to attempt an alteration thereof. If we demean ourſelves worthy of a rational happineſs, the laws of the moral ſyſtem, already eſtabliſhed, will afford to us; and as to phyſical evils, prudent œconomy may make them tolerable, or ward moſt of them off, for a ſeaſon, though they will unavoidably bring about the ſeperation of ſoul and body, and terminate with animal life, whether we pray for or againſt it.

To pray for any thing, which we can obtain by the due application of our natural powers, and neglect the means of procuring it, is impertinence and lazineſs in the abſtract; and to pray for that which God in the courſe of his providence, has put out of our power to obtain, is only murmuring againſt God, and finding fault with his providence, or acting the inconſiderate part of a child; *for example*, to pray for more wiſdom, underſtanding, grace or faith; for a more robuſt conſtitution, handſomer figure, or more of a gigantic ſize, would be the ſame as telling God, that we are diſſatisfied with our inferiority in the order of being; that neither our ſouls or bodies ſuit us; that he has been too ſparing of his benificence; that we want more wiſdom, and organs better fitted for ſhow, agility and ſuperiority. But we ought to conſider, that "*we cannot add one cubit to our ſtature*," or alter the conſtruction of our organic frame; and that our mental talents are finite; and that in a vaſt variety of proportions and diſproportions, as our Heavenly Father in his order of nature, and ſcale of being ſaw fit; who has nevertheleſs for the encouragement of intelligent nature ordained, that it ſhall be capable of improvement, and conſequently of inlargment; therefore, "*whoſoever lacketh wiſdom,*" inſtead of "*aſking it of God,*" let him improve what he has; that he may inlarge the original ſtock; this is all the poſſible way of gaining in wiſdom and knowledge, a competency of which will regulate our faith. But it is too common for great faith and little knowledge to unite in the ſame perſon; ſuch perſons are beyond the reach of argument and their faith immovable, though it cannot remove mountains. The only way to procure food, raiment, or the neceſſaries or conveniencies of life, is by natural means; we do not git them by wiſhing or praying for, but by actual exertion; and the only way to abtain virtue or morality is to practiſe and habituate ourſelves to it, and not to pray to God for it: he has naturally furniſhed us with talents or faculties ſuitable for the exerciſe and enjoyment of religion, and it is our buſineſs to improve them aright, or we muſt ſuffer the conſequences of it. A ſenſe of obligation and dependence on God is a rational devotion, and attended with adoration and thankfulneſs. We ſhould conform ourſelves to reaſon, the path of moral rectitude, and in ſo doing, we cannot fail of recommending ourſelves to God, and to our own conſciences. This is all the religion, which reaſon knows or con ever approve of.

Moses the celebrated prophet and legiſlator of the Iſraelites, ingraciated himſelf into their eſteem, by the ſtratagem of prayer, and pretended intimacy with God; he acquaints us, that he was once admitted to a ſight of his Back-Parts, and that "*No man can ſee*" his "*face and live*;" and at other times we are told that he "*talked* "*with God, face to face, as a man talketh with his* "*friend*;" and alſo that at times God waxed wroth with Iſrael, and how Moſes prayed for them; and at other times, that he ordered Aaron to offer ſweet incenſe to God, which *appeaſed his wrath*, and prevented his deſtroying Iſrael in his *hot diſpleaſure*. Theſe are the footſteps, by which we may trace ſacerdotal dominion to its ſource, and explore its progreſs in the world. "*And the Lord ſaid unto Moſes, how long will this* "*people provoke me? I will ſmite them with the peſ*"*tilence, and diſinherit them, and I will make of* "*thee a great nation, and mightier than they*," but Moſes advertiſes God of the injury, which ſo raſh a proceedure would do to his character among the nations; and alſo reminds him of his promiſe to

Iſrael, ſaying; "*Now if thou ſhall kill all this people as one man, then the nations, which have heard the fame of thee will ſpeak, ſaying, becauſe the Lord was not able to bring this people into the land, which he ſware unto them, therefore he hath ſlain them in the wilderneſs.*" That Moſes ſhould thus adviſe the omniſcient God, of diſhonorable conſequences which would attend a breach of promiſe, which he tells us, that God was unadviſedly about to make with the tribes of Iſrael, had not his remonſtrance prevented it, is very extraordinary and repugnant to reaſon; yet to an eye of faith it would exalt the man Moſes, "and make him very great;" for if we may credit his hiſtory of the matter, he not only averted God's judgment againſt Iſrael, and prevented them from being cut off as a nation, but by the ſame prayer procured for them a pardon of their ſin. "*Pardon I beſeech thee, the Iniquity of this people,*" and in the next verſe follows the anſwer, "*And the Lord ſaid, I have pardoned according to thy word.*" It ſeems that God had the power, but Moſes had the dictation of it, and ſaved Iſrael from the wrath and peſtilential fury of a Jealous God; and that he procured them a pardon of their ſin, "*for the Lord thy God is a jealous God.*" Jealouſy can have no exiſtence in that mind, which poſſeſſes perfect knowledge, and conſequently cannot without the greateſt impropriety be aſcribed to God, who knows all things, and needed none of the admonitions, advice or intelligence of Moſes, or any of his dictatorial prayers, "*And the Lord hearkened unto me at that time alſo*;" intimating, that it was a common thing for him to do the like. When teachers can once make the people believe that God anſwers their prayers, and that their eternal intereſt is dependent on them, they ſoon raiſe themſelves to oppulency, rule and high ſounding titles: as that of *His Holineſs*; *the Reverend Father in God*; *The Holy Poker*; *Biſhop of Souls*; and a variety of other ſuch like appelations, derogatory to the honor or juſt prerogative of God; as is Joſhua's hiſtory concerning the Lord's hearkening unto him at the battle of the Amorites, wherein he informs us, that he ordered the ſun to ſtand ſtill, ſaying; "*Sun ſtand thou ſtill upon Gibeon, and thou Moon in the valley of Ajalon, ſo the Sun ſtood ſtill and the Moon ſtayed until the people had avenged themſelves upon their enemies; ſo the ſun ſtood ſtill in the midſt of Heaven, and haſted not to go down about a whole day*;" and then adds, by way of ſupremacy to himſelf above all others, and in direct contradiction to the before recited paſſages of Moſes concerning the Lord's hearkening unto him, or to any other man but himſelf, ſaying; "*And there was no Day like that before it, or* *after it, that the Lord hearkened unto the voice of a man.*" There is not any thing more evident than that if the repreſentation given by Joſhua, as matter of fact, is true, thoſe exhibited by Moſes concerning the Lord's hearkening unto him are not: though the repreſentations of fact by Moſes and by Joſhua are allowed to be both canonical, yet it is impoſſible that both can be true. However, aſtronomy being but little underſtood in the age in which Joſhua lived; and the earth being in his days thought to be at reſt, and the ſun to revolve round it, makes it in no way ſtrange, that he caught himſelf by ordering the ſun to ſtand ſtill, which having ſince been diſcovered to have been the original fixed poſition of that luminous body, eclipſes the miraculous interpoſition of Joſhua. Furthermore, if we but reflect that on that very day Iſrael vanquiſhed the Amorites with a great ſlaughter, "*and chaced them along the way that goeth to Bethoron, and ſmote them to Azekah, and unto Makkedah,*" in ſo great a hurry of War, claſhing of Arms, exaſperation and elevation of mind, in conſequence of ſuch a triumphant victory, they could make but a partial obſervation on the length of the day; and being greatly elated with ſuch an extraordinary day's work, Joſhua took the advantage of, it and told them that it was an uncommon day for duration;

that he had interpoſed in the ſyſtem, and preſcribed to the ſun to ſtand ſtill about a whole day; and that they had two day's time to accompliſh thoſe great feats. The belief of ſuch a miraculous event to have taken place in the ſolar ſyſtem, in conſequence of the influence which Joſhua inſinuated that he had with God, would moſt effectually eſtabliſh his authority among the people; for if God would hearken to his voice well might man. This is the cauſe why the bulk of mankind in all ages and countries of the world, have been ſo much infatuated by their ghoſtly teachers, whom they have ever imagined to have had a ſpecial influence with God Almighty.

Chapter VIII.

SECTION I.

The vagueneſs and unintelligibleneſs of the Prophecies, render them incapable of proving Revelation.

PROPHECY is by ſome thought to be miraculous, and by others to be ſupernatural, and there are others, who indulge themſelves in an opinion, that they amount to no more than mere political conjectures. Some nations have feigned an intercourſe with good ſpirits by the art of Divination; and others with evil ones by the art of magic; and moſt nations have pretended to an intercourſe with the world of ſpirits both ways.

THE Romans truſted much to their ſibyline oracles and ſoothſayers; the Babylonians to their magicians,and aſtrologers ; the Egyptians and Perſians to their magicians ; and the Jews to their ſeers or prophets : and all nations and individuals, diſcover an anxiety for an intercourſe with the world of ſpirits ; which lays a foundation for artful and deſigning men, to impoſe upon them. But if the foregoing arguments in chapter ſixth, reſpecting the natural impoſſibility of an intercourſe of any unbodied or imperceptible mental beings with mankind, are true, then the foretelling of future events can amount to nothing more than political illuſion. For prophecy as well as all other ſort of prognoſtication muſt be ſupernaturally inſpired, or it could be no more than judging of future events from mere probability or gueſs-work, as the aſtronomers ingeniouſly confeſs in their calculations, by ſaying ; "Judgment of the weather, &c." So alſo reſpecting Aſtrology, provided there is any ſuch thing as futurity to be learned from it, it would be altogether a natural diſcovery ; for neither Aſtronomy or Aſtrology claim any thing of a miraculous or ſupernatural kind, but their calculations are meant to be predicated on the order and courſe of nature, with which our ſenſes are coverſant, and with which inſpiration or the mere co-operation of ſpirits is not pretended to act a part. So alſo concerning prophecy, if it be conſidered to be merely natural, (we will not at preſent

ſent diſpute whether it is true or falſe) upon this poſition it ſtands on the footing of probability or mere conjecture and uncertainty. But as to the doctrine of any ſupernatural agency of the divine mind on ours, which is commonly called inſpiration, it has been ſufficiently confuted in the ſixth Chapter; which arguments need not be repeated, nor does it concern my ſyſtem to ſettle the queſtion, whether prophecy ſhould be denominated miraculous or ſupernatural, inaſmuch as both theſe doctrines have been confuted; though it is my opinion, that were we to trace the notion of ſupernatural to its ſource, it would finally terminate in that which is denominated miraculous; for that which is above or beyond nature, if it has any poſitive exiſtence, it muſt be miraculous.

The writings of the prophets are moſt generally ſo looſe, vague and indeterminate in their meaning, or in the grammar of their preſent tranſlation, that the prophecies will as well anſwer to events in one period of time, as in another; and are equally applicable to a variety of events, which have and are ſtill taking place in the world, and are liable to ſo many different interpretations, that they are incapable of being underſtood or explained, except upon arbitrary principles, and therefore cannot be admitted as a proof of revelation; *as for inſtance,* "*it ſhall come to paſs in the laſt days, ſaith God.*" Who can underſtand the accompliſhment of the prophecies, that are expreſſed after this ſort? for every day in its turn has been, and will in its ſucceſſion be the laſt day; and if we advert to the expreſs words of the prophecy; *to wit,* "*the laſt days,*" there will be an uncertain plurality "*of laſt days,*" which muſt be underſtood to be ſhort of a month, or a year; or it ſhould have been expreſſed thus, and it ſhall come to paſs in the laſt months or years, inſtead of days: and if it had mentioned laſt years, it would be a juſt conſtruction to ſuppoſe, that it included a leſs number of years than a century; but as the prophecy mentions "*laſt days,*" we are at a loſs, which among the plurality of them to aſſign for the fulfiling of the prophecy.

FURTHERMORE, we cannot learn from the prophecy, in what month, year, or any other part of duration thoſe laſt days belong; ſo that we can never tell when ſuch vague prophecies are to take place, they therefore remain the arbitrary prerogative of fanatics to preſcribe their events in any age or period of time, when their diſtempered fancies may think moſt eligible. There are other prophecies ſtill more abſtruſe; *to wit,* "*And one ſaid unto the man clothed in linnen, which was upon the*

the waters of the river, how long ſhall it be to the end of theſe wonders? and I heard the man cloathed in linnen, which was upon the waters of the river, when he held up his right hand and his left hand unto Heaven, and ſware by him that liveth forever, that it ſhould be for a time, times and an half." The queſtion in the prophecy is aſked "*how long ſhall it be to the end of theſe wonders?*" and the anſwer is given with the ſolemnity of an oath, "*it ſhall be for a time, times and a half.*" A *time* is an indefinite part of duration, and ſo are *times*, and the third deſcription of time is as indefinite as either of the former deſcriptions of it; *to wit*, "*and an half*;" that is to ſay, *half a time.* There is no certain term given in any or either of the three deſcriptions of the end of the wonders alluded to, whereby any or all of them together are capable of computation, as there is no certain period marked out to begin or end a calculation. To compute an indefinite *time* in the ſingle number or quantity of duration is impoſſible, and to compute an uncertain plurality of ſuch indefinite *times* is equally perplexing and impracticable; and laſtly to define *half a time* by any poſſible ſucceſſion of its parts, is a contradiction, for *half a time* includes no time at all; inaſmuch as the ſmalleſt conception or poſſible moment or criterion of duration, is *a time*, or otherwiſe, by the addition of ever ſo many of thoſe parts together they would not prolong a period; ſo that there is not, and cannot be ſuch a part of time, as *half a time,* for be it ſuppoſed to be ever ſo momentous, yet if it includes any part of duration, it is *a time*, and not *half a time.* Had the prophet ſaid half a year, half a day, or half a minute, he would have ſpoken intelligibly; but *half a time* has no exiſtence at all, and conſequently no period could ever poſſibly arrive in the ſucceſſion or order of time, when there could be an end to the wonders alluded to: and in this ſenſe only, the prophecy is intelligible; *to wit, that it will never come to paſs.*

The Revelation of St. John the divine, involves the ſubject of time if poſſible in ſtill greater inconſiſtencies, viz. "*And to the woman was given two wings of a great eagle, that ſhe might fly into the wilderneſs, into her place: Where ſhe is nouriſhed for a time, and times and half a time.*" "*And the angel which I ſaw ſtand upon the ſea and upon the earth lifted up his hands to heaven, and ſware by him that liveth for ever and ever, who created heaven and the things that therein are, and the earth and the things that therein are, and the ſea and the things which are therein, that there ſhould be time no longer.*" Had this tremendous oath been verified there could have been no farther diſputations on the calculation

tion of "*time and times and half a time*," (or about any thing elſe) for that its ſucceſſion would have reached its laſt and final period at that important criſis when time ſhould have been "no longer." The ſolar ſyſtem muſt have ceaſed its motions, from which we compute the ſucceſſion of time, and the race of man would have been extinct; for as long as they may be ſuppoſed to exiſt, time muſt of neceſſary conſequence have exiſted alſo; and ſince the courſe of nature, including the generations of mankind, has been continued from the time of the poſitive denunciation of the angel to this day, we may ſafely conclude, that his interference in the ſyſtem of nature, was perfectly romantic.

THE Apoſtle Peter, at the firſt Chriſtian pentecoſt, objecting to the accuſation of their being drunk with new wine, explains the prophecy of the prophet Joel, who propheſied of the events which were to take place in the laſt days, as coming to paſs at that early period; his words are handed down to us as follows; "*But this is that which is ſpoken by the prophet Joel, and it ſhall come to paſs in the laſt days, ſaith God, that I will pour out of my ſpirit upon all fleſh, and your ſons and your daughters ſhall propheſy, and your young men ſhall ſee viſions, and your old men ſhall dream dreams.*"

The hiſtory of the out-pouring of the ſpirit at the pentecoſt, admiting it to have been a fact, would have been very inadequate to the prophetical prediction, *viz. I will pour out my ſpirit upon all fleſh*; the moſt favorable conſtruction is that the prophet meant human fleſh, *i. e.* all human fleſh; but inſtead of a univerſal effuſion of the ſpirit, it appears to have been reſtricted to a ſelect number, who were collected together at Jeruſalem, and the concourſe of ſpectators thought them to be delirious. It may however be ſuppoſed, that St. Peter was a better judge of the accompliſhment of the prophecy than I am: well then, admitting his application of the propheſy of the laſt days to take place at the firſt pentecoſt; it being now more than ſeventeen hundred years ago, they conſequently could not have been the laſt days.

Still a query ariſes, whether every of the prophecies, which were predicted to be fulfilled in the laſt days, muſt not have been accompliſhed at that time; or whether any of the prophecies thus expreſſed are ſtill to be compleated, by any events which may in future take place; or by any which have taken place ſince thoſe laſt days called Pentecoſt; or whether any prophecy whatever can be fulfilled more than once; and if ſo, how many times; or how it is poſſible for us, out of the vaſt variety of events (in which there is ſo great a ſimilarity) which one in particular to aſcribe to its right prediction among the numerous prophecies.

When we conſider the analogy that there is in the ſeries of nature's operations, and thoſe which reſpect the riſe and fall of nations, empires and governments; and alſo thoſe viciſſitudes and changes which reſpect mankind in leſs ſocieties, or as individuals; together with the vagueneſs and uncertainty with which the prophecies are embarraſſed: and the difficulties, uncertainties and utter impoſſibility of underſtanding what particular event (in the vaſt ſeries, that already has, or hereafter may take place in the world) to affix to its original and proper prediction, the knowledge of which is eſſential to the underſtanding of the prophecies; we ſhall diſcover the whole notion of prophecy to be a mere fable. For to underſtand the propheſies, and point out their events, would require as much inſpiration, as may be ſuppoſed to have been neceſſary in their original prediction. Upon the whole, it appears to be at leaſt ſuch a precarious, round-about, and uncertain way of proving revelation, that it is altogether inadmiſſible.

Furthermore, it would be no ways certain that the prophecies were immediately from God, or from miniſtering ſpirits commiſſioned by him; even admitting it poſſible for mankind to hold a correſpondence with the world of ſpirits. We are often deceived by wicked hypocritical and deſigning men, and why not more likely to be impoſed upon by inviſible wicked beings, whom we might take to be good ones? we are certainly leſs acquainted with the wiles of diabolical and imperceptible ſpirits, than with the diſſimulations of mankind, and conſequently, could not ſo well guard againſt them; and if we admit an intercourſe with thoſe who are good, we at the ſame time do it with the bad, as both good and bad ſpirits have one common nature, the ſame as virtuous and vicious men: ſo that if the door of communication is open to the one, it is open to the other, and to diſtinguiſh the true chracters of thoſe mental and inviſible beings apart, would be impoſſible, except we make natural reaſon our director. But ſuch inſpirations as theſe would be no more than natural reaſonings, which would ſpoil them in the opinion of true inſpirationiſts. But if the ſubject-matter of a ſuppoſed inſpired revelation is above or beyond our natural capacity, we could have no clue or rule, whereby to underſtand it, or whether it was from a good or bad ſpirit; beſides, we ſhould be at a loſs to diſtinguiſh the agency of the divine ſpirit from that of mere creatures; in theſe uncertainties we ſhould be confounded, and not know what to rely on concerning any ghoſtly intelligence from the world of ſpirits: which reaſons, are as applicable to the prophets and firſt promulgators of revelation, as to us who live in this age of the world.

Furthermore, provided ſome of the prophecies ſhould point out ſome particular events, which have ſince taken place, there might have been previous grounds of probability, that ſuch or ſuch events would in the ordinary courſe of things come to paſs; *for inſtance*, it is no ways extraordinary, that the prophet Jeremiah ſhould be able to predict that Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon ſhould take Jeruſalem, when we conſider the power of the Babyloniſh empire at that time, and the feebleneſs of the Jews. "*The word, which came to Jeremiah from the Lord, when Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon and all his army, and all the kingdoms of the earth of his dominion, and all the people fought againſt Jeruſalem, and againſt all the cities thereof, ſaying, thus ſaith the Lord the God of Iſrael, go and ſpeak unto Zedekiah king of Judah, and tell him, thus ſaith the Lord, behold, I will give this city Jeruſalem into the hand of the king of Babylon.*" No politicians could at the time of the prediction be much at a loſs reſpecting the fate of Jeruſalem. Nor would it be at all evidential to any candid and ingenious enquirer, that God had any manner of agency in fabricating the prophecies, though ſome of them ſhould ſeem to decypher future events; as they might, to human appearance, turn out right, merely from accident or contingency. It is very improbable, or rather incompatable with human nature, that the prophecy of Micah will ever come to paſs, who predicts that "*they*," ſpeaking of mankind, "*ſhall beat their ſwords into plough-ſhares, and their ſpears into pruning-hooks; nation ſhall not lift up ſword againſt nation, neither ſhall they learn war any more.*" Some of the prophecies are ſo apparently contradictory, that they contain their own confutation; *as for inſtance*, the prophecy of Michaiah contained in the book of Chronicles, which probably is as abſurd as any thing that is to be met with in ſtory, "*and when he was come unto the king, the king ſaid unto him, Micaiah, ſhall we go to Ramoth Gilead to battle, or ſhall I forbear? and he ſaid go ye up and proſper, and they ſhall be delivered into your hand, and the king ſaid unto him, how many times ſhall I adjure thee, that thou tell me nothing, but that which is true in the name of the Lord? then he ſaid I did ſee all Iſrael ſcattered upon the mountains, as ſheep that* *have no ſhepherd, and the Lord ſaid, theſe have no maſter, let them return therefore, every man to his houſe in peace: and the king ſaid unto Jehoſhaphat, did not I tell thee, that he would prophecy no good concerning me but evil.*" "*again he ſaid, therefore hear the word of the Lord, I ſaw the Lord ſitting upon his throne, and all the hoſt of Heaven ſtanding on his right hand and on his left, and the Lord ſaid who ſhall entice Ahab, King of Iſrael, that he may go up and fall at Ramoth Gilead, and one ſpake ſaying after this manner, and another ſaying after that manner, then there came out a ſpirit and ſtood before the Lord, and ſaid I will entice him, and the Lord ſaid unto him wherewith? And he ſaid I will go forth and be a lying ſpirit in the mouth of all his prophets, and the Lord ſaid thou ſhalt entice him and thou ſhalt alſo prevail, go out and do even ſo, now therefore behold the Lord hath put a lying ſpirit in the mouth of theſe thy prophets, and the Lord hath ſpoken evil againſt thee.* It is obſervable that the prophet at firſt predicted the proſperity of Ahab, ſaying, "*go ye up and proſper, and they ſhall be delivered into your hand,*" but after a little adjurement by the King, he alters his prediction and propheſies diametrically the reverſe. What is more certain than that the event of the expedition againſt Ramoth Gilead muſt have comported with the one or the other of his prophecies? Certain it was, that Ahab would take it or not take it, he muſt either proſper or not proſper, as there could be no third way or mean between theſe two; and it appears that the prophet was determined to be in the right of it by his propheſying both ways. It farther appears from his propheſy, that there was a great conſultation in Heaven to entice Ahab King of Iſrael to his deſtruction, and that a certain lying ſpirit came and ſtood before the Lord, and propoſed to him to go out and be a lying ſpirit in the mouth of the King's prophets. But what is the moſt incredible is, that God ſhould countenance it, and give him poſitive orders to falſify the truth to the other prophets. It appears that Micaiah in his firſt propheſy, viz. *Go up to Ramoth Gilead and proſper, and they ſhall be delivered into your hand*, acted in concert with the lying ſpirit which ſtood before the Lord, but afterwards acted the treacherous part by propheſying the truth, which, if we may credit his account, was in direct oppoſition to the ſcheme of Heaven.

SECTION II.

The Contentions which ſubſiſted between the Prophets reſpecting their Veracity, and their Inconſiſtencies with one another, and with the nature of Things, and their Omiſſion in teaching the Doctrine of Immortality, precludes the Divinity of their Prophecies.

WHOEVER examines the writings of the prophets will diſcover a ſpirit of ſtrife and contention among them; they would charge each other with fallacy and deception: diſputations of this kind are plentifully interſperſed through the writings of the prophets: we will tranſcribe a few of thoſe paſſages out of many: "*Thus ſaith the Lord to the fooliſh prophets that follow their own ſpirit, and have found nothing, they have ſeen vanity and lying divination, ſaying the Lord ſaith, and the Lord hath not ſent them, and they have made others to hope that they would confirm the word.*" And in another place, "*I have not ſent theſe prophets yet they ran; I have not ſpoken unto them yet they propheſy.*" Again, "*I have heard what the prophets ſaid that propheſy lies in my name, ſaying, I have dreamed, I have dreamed, yet they are the prophets of the deceit of their own hearts.*" And again, "*Yea they are greedy dogs, which can never have enough, and they are ſhepherds* *that cannot underſtand; they all look to their own way, every one for his gain from his quarter.*"

It being the caſe that there was ſuch a ſtrife among the prophets to recommend themſelves to the people, and every art and diſſimulation having been practiſed by them to gain power and ſuperiority, all which artifice was to be judged of by the great vulgar, or in ſome inſtances by the political views of the Jewiſh Sanhedrim, how could thoſe who were cotemporaries with the ſeveral prophets, diſtinguiſh the premiſed true prophets from the falſe? Much leſs, how can we, who live more than ſeventeen hundred years ſince the laſt of them, be able to diſtinguiſh them apart? And yet, without the knowledge of this diſtinction, we cannot with propriety give credit to any of them, even admitting there were ſome true prophets among them. Nor is it poſſible for us to know but that their very inſtitution was merely a reach of policy of the Iſraelitiſh and Judaic governments, the more eaſily, implicitly and effectually to keep their people in ſubordination, by inculcating a belief that they were ruled with ſpecial directions from heaven, which in fact originated from the Sanhedrim. Many other nations have made uſe of much the ſame kind of policy.

In the 22d chapter of Geneſis, we have a hiſtory of a very extraordinary command from God to Abraham, and of a very unnatural attempt of his to obey it. "*And it came to paſs after theſe things that God did tempt Abraham, and he ſaid unto him Abraham, and he ſaid behold here I am, and he ſaid take now thy only ſon Iſaac, whom thou loveſt, and get thee to the land of Moriah, and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of*;" "*And they came to the place which God had told him of, and Abraham built an altar there, and laid the wood in order, and bound Iſaac his ſon, and laid him on the altar upon the wood; and Abraham ſtretched forth his hand and took the knife to ſlay his ſon.*" Shocking attempt! Murder is allowed by mankind in general, to be the moſt capital crime that is poſſible to be acted among men; it would therefore be incompatible with the divine nature to have enjoined it by a poſitive command to Abraham to have killed his ſon; a murder of all others the moſt unnatural and cruel. and attended with the moſt aggravating circumſtances, not merely from a preſcribed breach of the ties of parental affection, but from the conſideration that the child was to be (if we may credit, the command) offered to God as a religious ſacrifice. What could have been a more complicated wickedneſs than the obedience of this command would have been ? and what can be more abſurd than to ſuppoſe that it came from God ? It is argued, in vindication of the injunction to Abraham to kill his ſon, that it was merely for a trial of his obedience, and that God never deſigned to have him do it; to prevent which an angel from heaven called to him and gave him counter orders, not to ſlay his ſon; but to ſuppoſe that God needed ſuch an experiment, or any other, in order to know whether Abraham would be obedient to his commands, is utterly incompatible with his omniſcience, who, without public exhibitions underſtands all things; ſo that had the injunction been in itſelf, fit and reaſonable, and alſo from God, the compliance or noncompliance of Abraham thereto, could not have communicated any new idea to the divine mind. Every part of the conduct of mankind is a trial of their obedience and is known to God, as well as the particular conduct of Abraham; beſides in the canonical writings, we read that "*God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man.*" How then can it be "*that God did tempt Abraham*"? a ſort of employment which, in ſcripture, is commonly aſcribed to the Devil. It is a very common thing to hear Abraham extolled for attempting to comply with the ſuppoſed command of ſacrificing his ſon; but it appears to me, that it had been wiſer and more becoming the character of a virtuous man, for Abraham to have replied in anſwer to the injunction as follows, *to wit*, that it could not poſſibly have come from God, who was the fountain of goodneſs and perfection, and unchangeable in his nature, who had endowed him with reaſon and underſtanding, whereby he knew his duty to God, his ſon, and to himſelf, better than to kill his only ſon, and offer him as a religious ſacrifice to God: for God would never have implanted in his mind ſuch a ſtrong affection towards him, nor ſuch a conſcious ſenſe of duty to provide for, protect and ſuccour him in all dangers, and to promote his happineſs and well-being, provided he had deſigned, that he ſhould have laid violent hands on his life. And inaſmuch as the command was, in itſelf, morally ſpeaking, unfit, and altogether unworthy of God, he preſumed that it never originated from him, but from ſome inhuman, cruel and deſtructive being, who delighted in wo, and pungent grief; for God could not have been the author of ſo baſe an injunction, nor could he be pleaſed with ſo inhuman and ſinful a ſacrifice.

Moses in his laſt chapter of Duteronomy crowns his hiſtory with the particular account of his own death and burial. "*So Moſes the ſervant of the Lord died there, in the land of Moab, according to the word* *of the Lord, and he buried him in a valley, in the land of Moab, over againſt Bethpeor, but no man knew of his ſepulchre unto this day; and Moſes was an hundred and twenty years old when he died, his eyes were not dim, nor his natural force abated, and the children of Iſrael wept for Moſes in the plains of Moab thirty days.*" This is the only hiſtorian in the circle of my reading, who has ever given the public a particular account of his own death, and how old he was at that deciſive period, where he died, who buried him, and where he was buried, and withal of the number of days his friends and acquaintances mourned and wept for him. I muſt confeſs I do not expect to be able to adviſe the public of the term of my life, nor the circumſtances of my death and burial, nor of the days of the weeping or laughing of my ſurvivors.

PART of the laws of Moſes were arbitrary impoſitions upon the tribes of Iſrael, and have no foundation in the reaſon and fitneſs of things, particularly that in which he inculcates puniſhing the children for the iniquities of the father; "*viſiting the iniquities of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children unto the third and fourth generation.*" There is no reaſon to be given, why the iniquity of the father might not as well have involved the fifth, ſixth and ſeventh generations, and ſo on to the lateſt poſterity in guilt and puniſhment, as the four firſt generations; for if it was poſſible, that the iniquity of the father could be juſtly viſited upon any of his poſterity, who were not accomplices with him in the iniquity, or were not ſome way or other aiding or acceſſary in it, then the iniquity might as juſtly be viſited upon any one of the ſucceeding generations as upon another, or upon the generation of any indifferent perſon: for arbitrary imputations of iniquity are equally abſurd in all ſuppoſable caſes; ſo that if we once admit the poſſibility of viſiting iniquity, upon any others than the perpetrators, be they who they will, we overturn our natural and ſcientifical notions of a perſonal retribution of juſtice among mankind. It is, in plain Engliſh, puniſhing the innocent for the ſin of the guilty. But virtue or vice cannot be thus viſited or imputed from the fathers to the un-offending children, or to children's children; or which is the ſame thing from the guilty to the innocent; for moral good or evil is mental and perſonal, which cannot be transferred, changed or altered from one perſon to another, but is inherently connected with its reſpective perſonal actors, and conſtitutes a quality or habit, and is the merit or demirit of the reſpective agents or proficients in moral good or evil, and is by nature unalienable, "*The righteouſneſs*

ouſneſs of the righteous ſhall be upon him, and the wickedneſs of the wicked ſhall be upon him." But as we ſhall have occaſion to argue this matter at large in the twelfth chapter of this treatiſe, where we ſhall treat of the imputed ſin of Adam to his poſterity, and of imputative righteouſneſs, we will diſcuſs the ſubject of imputation no farther in this place. However, the unjuſt practice of puniſhing the children for the iniquity of the father having been an ordinance of Moſes, was more or leſs continued by the Iſraelites, as in the caſe of Achan and his children. "*And Joſhua and all Iſrael with him took Achan the ſon of Zerah, and the ſilver and the garment, and the wedge of gold, and his ſons, and his daughters, and his oxen, and his aſſes, and his ſheep, and his tent, and all that he had, and brought them to the valley of Achor, and all Iſrael ſtoned him with ſtones, and burned them with fire, after that they had ſtoned them with ſtones, and they raiſed over him a great heap of ſtones unto this day; ſo the Lord turned from the fierceneſs of his anger.*" '*Fierce anger*' is incompatable with the divine perfection, nor is the cruel extirpation of the innocent family, and live ſtock of Achan, to be accounted for on principles of reaſon. This flagrant injuſtice of puniſhing the children for the iniquity of the father had introduced a proverb in Iſrael, *viz*, "*The fathers have eaten ſour grapes and the childrens* *teeth are ſet on edge.*" But the prophet Ezekiel in the 18th chapter of his prophecies, has confuted Moſes's ſtatutes of viſiting the iniquities of the father upon the children, and repealed them with the authority of *thus ſaith the Lord*, which was the manner of expreſſion by which they were promulgated. But the prophet Ezekiel did not repeal thoſe ſtatutes of Moſes merely by the authority of *thus ſaith the Lord*, but over and above gives the reaſon for it, otherwiſe he could not have repealed them; for Moſes enacted them as he relates, from as high authority as Ezekiel could pretend to in nullifying them; ſo that had he not produced reaſon and argument, it would have been "*thus ſaith the Lord*," againſt "*Thus ſaith the Lord.*" But Ezekiel reaſons concluſively, viz. "*The word of the Lord came unto me again, ſaying, what mean ye that ye uſe this proverb concerning the land of Iſrael, ſaying, the fathers have eaten ſour grapes and the childrens teeth are ſet on edge; as I live ſaith the Lord God, ye ſhall not have occaſion any more to uſe this proverb in Iſrael. Behold all ſouls are mine, as the ſoul of the father ſo alſo the ſoul of the ſon is mine; the ſoul that ſineth it ſhall die, the ſon ſhall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither ſhall the father bear the iniquity of the ſon, the righteouſneſs of the righteous ſhall be upon him, and the wickedneſs of the wicked ſhall be upon him, therefore I will judge you O* *houſe of Iſrael, every one according to their ways ſaith the Lord God.* It is obſervable that the prophet ingeniouſly ſays, "*Ye ſhall not have occaſion any more to uſe this proverb in Iſrael,*" implicitly acknowledging that the law of Moſes had given occaſion to that proverb, nor was it poſſible to remove that proverb or grievance to which the Iſraelites were liable on account of viſiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, but by the repeal of the ſtatute of Moſes in that caſe made and provided; which was effectually done by Ezekiel: in conſequence whereof the adminiſtration of juſtice became diſencumbered of the embarraſments under which it had laboured for many centuries. Thus it appears, that thoſe laws, denominated the laws of God, are not infallible, but have their exceptions and may be diſpenſed with.

UNDER the diſpenſation of the law a breach of the Sabbath was a capital offence. "*And while the children of Iſrael were in the wilderneſs, they found a man that gathered ſticks on the Sabbath day, and the Lord ſaid unto Moſes the man ſhall ſurely be put to death, and all the congregation ſhall ſtone him with ſtones without the camp; and all the congregation brought him without the camp and ſtoned him with ſtones, and he died, as the Lord commanded Moſes.*" The very inſtitution of the Sabbath was in itſelf arbitrary, otherwiſe it could not have been changed from the laſt to the firſt day of the week. For thoſe ordinances which are predicated on the reaſon and fitneſs of things can never change: as that which is once morally fit, always remains ſo, and is immutable, nor could the ſame crime, in juſtice, deſerve death in Moſes's time (as in the inſtance of the Iſraelite's gathering ſticks) and but a pecuniary fine in ours; as in the inſtance of the breach of Sabbath in theſe times.

Time itſelf is as incapable of being holy or unholy as the figure of a triangle may be ſuppoſed to be; for time is not an agent; it is no more than a ſucceſſion of duration divided into diſtinct parts, or ſeperate periods, in the ſucceſſion whereof agents act and are amenable for its improvement; it is as great an impropriety to call time holy, as it would be to call ſpace ſo; for that neither of them contain the properties of reflection and conſciouſneſs or the knowledge of moral good or evil; theſe are the properties that conſtitute an agent, which agent, in ſome degree may be ſaid to be holy or unholy, as its actions conform to or deviate from moral rectitude. But time is as inadequate by nature for the purpoſe of holineſs, or the contrary, as rain, ſunſhine, or any other inanimate

animate or unintelligent beings may be ſuppoſed to be, which will be further evinced from the conſideration, that moral obligation is equally binding on all rational beings, on all days and parts of time alike, therefore one day can have no preeminence above another, as to its purity for religious purpoſes. Furthermore, the order of nature reſpecting day and night, or the ſucceſſion of time, is ſuch, as renders it impoſſible that any identical part of time, which conſtitutes one day, can do it to all the inhabitants of the globe at the ſame time, or in the ſame period. Day is perpetually dawning, and night commencing to ſome or other of the inhabitants of the terraqueous Ball without intermiſſion. At the diſtance of fifteen degrees of Longitude to the eaſtward of us, the day begins an hour ſooner than it does with us here in Vermont, and with us an hour ſooner than it does fifteen degrees to the weſtward, and thus it continues its ſucceſſion round the Globe, and night as regularly revolving after it, ſucceeding each other in their alternate rounds; ſo that when it is midday with us, it is mid-night with our ſpecies, denominated the *Periæci*, who live under the ſame parallel of Latitude with us, but under a directly oppoſite Meridian; ſo likewiſe, when it is midday with them, it is mid-night with us. Thus it appears, that the ſame identical part of time, which compoſes our days, compoſe their nights, and while we are keeping Sunday, they are in their midnight dreams; nor is it poſſible in nature, that the ſame identical part of time, which makes the firſt day of the week with us, ſhould make the firſt day of the week with the inhabitants on the oppoſite ſide of the Globe. The apoſtle James ſpeaks candidly on this ſubject, ſaying, "*Some eſteem one day above another, others eſteem every day alike let every one be fully perſuaded in his own mind,*" and keep the laws of the land. It was unfortunate for the Iſraelite who was accuſed of gathering ſticks on the Iſraelitiſh Sabbath, that he was convicted of it; for though by the law of his people he muſt have died, yet the act for which he ſuffered was no breach of the law of nature. Suppoſing that very delinquent ſhould come to this world again, and gather ſticks on Saturday in this country, he might, as an hireling receive his wages for it, without being expoſed to a ſimilar proſecution of that of Moſes; and provided he ſhould gather ſticks on our Sunday, his wages would atone for his crime, inſtead of his life, ſince modern legiſlators have abated the rigor of the law for which he died.

THE barbarous zeal of the prophet Samuel in hewing Agag to pieces, after he was made a priſoner of war by Saul king of Iſrael, could not proceed from a good ſpirit, nor would ſuch a cruelty be permitted towards a priſoner in any civilized nation at this day. "*And Samuel hewed Agag to pieces before the Lord in Gilgal.*" The unmanly deed ſeems to be mentioned with a phiz of religion. viz. That it was done before the Lord; but that cannot alter the nature of the act itſelf, for every act of mankind, whether good or evil, is done before the Lord, as much as Samuel's hewing Agag to pieces. The orders which Samuel gave unto Saul (as he ſays by the word of the Lord) to cut off the poſterity of the Amalekites, and to deſtroy them utterly, together with the cauſe of God's diſpleaſure with them, are unworthy of God, as may be ſeen at large in the 15th Chapter of the firſt Book of Samuel. "*Spare them not, but ſlay both man and woman, infant and ſuckling, ox and ſheep, camel and aſs.*" The oſtenſible reaſon for all this was, becauſe the anceſtors of the Amalekites, as long before the days of Samuel as when the children of Iſrael came out of Egypt, which was near five hundred years, had ambuſhed and fought againſt Iſrael, in their paſſage from thence to the land which they afterwards inhabited: Although it appears from the hiſtory of Moſes and Joſhua, that Iſrael was going to diſpoſſeſs them of their country, which is thought to be a ſufficient cauſe of war in theſe days. It is true they inſinuate that the Lord had given thoſe lands to the children of Iſrael, yet it appears that they had to fight for it and get it by the hardeſt notwithſtanding; as is the caſe with nations in theſe days, and ever has been ſince the knowlege of hiſtory.

BUT be the old quarrel between Iſrael and Amalek as it will, it cannot on any principle be ſuppoſed, the ſucceſſors of thoſe Amalekites, in the days of Samuel, could be guilty of any premiſed tranſgreſſions of their predeceſſors. The ſanguinary laws of Moſes did not admit of viſiting the iniquities of the fathers upon the children in the line of ſucceſſion, farther than to the fourth generation, but the Amalekites againſt whom Samuel had denounced the wrath of God, by the hand of Saul, were at a much greater remove from thoſe their progenitors, who were charged with the crime for which they were cut off as a nation. Nor is it compatible with reaſon to ſuppoſe, that God ever directed either Moſes or Joſhua to extirpate the Canaanitiſh nations. "*And we took all his cities at that time, and utterly deſtroyed the men and the women, and the little ones of every city, we left none to remain,*". There is not any more propriety in aſcribing

cribing theſe cruelties to God, than thoſe that were perpetrated by the Spaniards againſt the Mexican and Peruvian indians or natives of America. Every one who dares to exerciſe his reaſon, free from biaſs, will readily diſcern, that the inhumanities exerciſed towards the Canaanites and Amorites, Mexicans and Peruvians, were deteſtibly wicked, and could not be approbated by God, or by rational and good men. Undoubtedly avarice and domination were the cauſes of thoſe unbounded cruelties, in which religion had as little to do as in the cruſades to the holy land (ſo called.)

The writings of the prophets abound with prodigies, and ſtrange and unnatural events. The walls of Jericho are repreſented to have fallen to the ground in conſequence of a blaſt of ram's horns; Balaam's aſs to ſpeak to his maſter, and the prophet Elijah is ſaid to have been carried off bodily into heaven by a chariot, in a whirlwind. Strange ſtories! But other ſcriptures tell us "*Fleſh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God.*" The hiſtory of the affront, which the little children of Bethel gave the prophet Eliſha, his curſing them, and their deſtruction by the bears, has the appearance of a fable. That Eliſha ſhould be ſo exaſperated at the children for calling him *bald head*, and telling him to *go up*, was rather a ſample of ill-breeding: Moſt gentlemen would have laughed at the joke, inſtead of curſing them, or being inſtrumental in their deſtruction, by mercileſs, wild and voracious beaſts. Though the children were ſaucy, yet a man of any conſiderable candor would have made an allowance for their non-age, "*for childhood and youth are vanity.*" "*And he went up from thence unto Bethel, and as he was going up by the way, there came forth little children out of the city and mocked him, and ſaid unto him go up thou bald head, go up thou bald head, and he turned back and looked on them and he curſed them in the name of the Lord, and there came forth two ſhe-bears out of the wood, and tare forty and two children of them.*" It ſeems by the children's addreſs to Eliſha, that he was an old bald headed man, and that they had heard, that his mate Elijah had gone up a little before; and as it was an uncommon thing for men to kite away into the air, and leave the world after that ſort, it is likely that it excited a curioſity in the children to ſee Eliſha go off with himſelf in the ſame manner, which occaſioned their particular mode of ſpeech to him ſaying *go up bald head.* The writings of Solomon, king of Iſrael muſt needs have been foiſted into the canonnical volume by ſome means or other, for no one paſſage therein gives the leaſt intimation of inſpiration, or that he had any immediate dictation from God in his compoſitions, but on the contrary he informs us that he acquired his knowledge by applying himſelf to wiſdom "*to ſeek and to ſearch out concerning all things, that are done under the Sun, this ſore travail,*" ſays he, "*has God given to the ſons of men to be exerciſed therewith.*" And ſince Solomon never pretended to inſpiration, others cannot juſtly claim his writing to have been any thing more than natural reaſonings, for who can with propriety ſtamp his writings with divine authority, when he pretended no ſuch thing, but to the contrary? His Song of Songs appears to be rather of the amorous kind, and is ſuppoſed to have been written at the time he was making love to the daughrer of Pharaoh king of Egypt, who is ſaid to have been a princeſs of exquiſite beauty and exceeding coy, and ſo captivated his affections that it made him light headed, and ſing about the "*joints of her thighs*" and "*her belly.*"

The divine legation of Moſes and the prophets is rendered queſtionable from the conſideration that they never taught the doctrine of immortality; their rewards and puniſhments are altogether temporary, terminating at death; they have not ſo much as exhibited any ſpeculation of ſurviving the grave: to this is aſcribed the unbelief of the Sadducees of the reſurrection of the dead, or of an angel or ſpirit, as they ſtrenuouſly adhered to the law of Moſes: For they could not imagine, but that their great prophet and law-giver would have apprized them of a ſtate of immortality had it been true; and in this the Sadducees ſeem to argue with force on their poſition of the divine legation of Moſes. For admitting the reality of man's immortality, it appears incredible to ſuppoſe, that God ſhould have ſpecially commiſſioned Moſes, as his prophet and inſtructor to the tribes of Iſrael, and not withal to have inſtructed them in the important doctrine of a future exiſtence; the belief and apprehenſion of which is ſo eſſential to the encouragement of morality, and without which our ſpeculations on religious topics would be narrow and contracted, as they would be confined only to the ſtage of human life; which would depreſs every exalted and dignified idea of the being, creation, perfection and providence of God; the more ſo as this is not a world wherein juſtice univerſally, and in all caſes, takes place, and therefore, without an apprehenſion and perſuaſion of another to come, wherein juſtice, truth and morality will reign triumphant, we could have but a low, unjuſt, and improper conception of the moral government of God, and our motives to the practice of virtue would be exceeding weak and deficient. In fine, the doctrine of immortality is of ſuch importance to mankind, and to the cauſe of religion in the world, as to induce us to conclude, that had Moſes and the prophets been ſpecially commiſſioned by God, to inſtruct mankind in religious matters, they would not have confined their theology to this temporary life only, but would have extended it to an eternal ſeries of exiſtence.

SECTION III.

Dreams or Viſions uncertain and chimerical Channel for the conveyance of Revelation; with remarks on the Communication of the Holy Ghoſt to the Diſciples, by the Prayers and laying on of the Apoſtles Hands, with Obſervations on the Divine Dictations of the firſt Promulgators of the Goſpel, and an Account of the Elect Lady, and her new Sectary of Shakers.

IT appears from the writings of the prophets and apoſtles, that part of their revelations were communicated to them by dreams and viſions, which have no other exiſtence but in the imagination, and are defined to be "the images which appear to the mind during ſleep, figuratively, a chimera, a groundleſs fancy or conceit, without reaſon." Our experience agrees with this diffinition, and evinces that there is no truſt to be repoſed in them. They are fictitious images of the mind, not under the controul of the underſtanding, and therefore not regarded at this day except by the credulous and ſuperſtitious, who ſtill retain a veneration for them. But that a revelation from God to man, to be continued to the lateſt poſterity as a divine and perfect rule of duty or law, ſhould be communicated through ſuch a fictitious and chimerical channel, carries with it the evident marks of deception itſelf, or of unintelligibleneſs, as appears from the viſion of St. Paul. “*It is not expedient for me doubtleſs to glory, I will come to viſions and revelations of the Lord; I knew a man in Chriſt above fourteen years ago, whether in the body I cannot tell, or whether out of the body, I cannot tell, God knoweth, ſuch an one caught up to the third heavens. And I knew ſuch a man, whether in the body or out of the body I cannot tell, God knoweth, how that he was caught up unto Paradiſe and heard unſpeakable words which is not lawful for a man to utter.*” That God knoweth the whole affair, will not be diſputed, but that we ſhould underſtand it is impoſſible, for the Apoſtle's account of his viſion is unintelligible; it appears that he was rather in a delirium or ſtupor, ſo that he knew not whether he was in or out of the body: He ſays he heard “*unſpeakable words*,” but this communicates no intelligence of the ſubject-matter of them to us; and that they “*were not lawful for a man to utter*,” but what they were, or wherein their unlawfulneſs to be uttered by man conſiſted, he does not inform us. His revelation from his own ſtory was unſpeakable and unlawful, and ſo he told us nothing what it was, nor does it compoſe any part of revelation, which is *to make known.* He is explicit as to his being caught up to the third heaven, but how he could underſtand that is incredible, when at the ſame time he knew not whether he was in the body or out of the body; and if he was in ſuch a delirium that he did not know ſo domeſtic a matter as that, it is not to be ſuppoſed that he could be a competent judge whether he was at the firſt, ſecond, third, or fourth heaven, or whether he was advanced above the ſurface of the earth, or not.

That the Apoſtles in their miniſtry were dictated by the Holy Ghoſt, in the ſettlement of diſputable doctrines, is highly queſtionable. "*Foraſmuch as we have heard that certain, which went out from us have troubled you with words, ſubverting your ſouls, ſaying, ye muſt be circumciſed and keep the law, to whom we gave no ſuch commandment, for it ſeemed good to the Holy Ghoſt, and to us, to lay upon you no other burthen than theſe neceſſary things.* Acts 15. And after having given a hiſtory of the diſputations concerning circumciſion, and of keeping the law of Moſes, and of the reſult of the council, the ſame chapter informs us, that a contention happened ſo ſharp between Paul and Barnabas, "*that they parted aſunder the one from the other.*" Had the Holy Ghoſt been the dictator of the firſt teachers of Chriſtianity, as individuals, there could have been no diſputable doctrines or controverſies, reſpecting the religion which they were promulgating in the world, or in the manner of doing it, to be referred to a general "*council of the apoſtles and elders held at Jeruſalem*;" for had they been directed by the Holy Ghoſt, there could have been no controverſies among them to have referred to the council. And inaſmuch as the Holy Ghoſt neglected them as individuals, why is it not as likely that it neglected to dictate the council held at Jeruſalem or elſewhere? It ſeems that the Holy Ghoſt no otherwiſe directed them in their plan of religion, than by the general council of the apoſtles and elders, the ſame as all other communities are governed. "*Paul having paſſed through the upper coaſts came to Epheſus, and finding certain diſciples he ſaid unto them have ye received the Holy Ghoſt ſince ye believed? and they ſaid unto him we have not ſo much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghoſt; and when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Ghoſt came on them, and they ſpake with tongues and propheſied. Now when the Apoſtles which were* *at Jeruſalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they ſent unto them Peter and John, who, when they were come down prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghoſt, for as yet he was fallen on none of them, only they were baptiſed in the name of the Lord Jeſus; then laid they their hands on them and they received the Holy Ghoſt; and when Simon ſaw that through the laying on of the Apoſtles hands, the Holy Ghoſt was given, he offered them money.*" That the Holy Ghoſt or the Divine Spirit which is in eſſence the ſame, ſhould have been given to the diſciples, at the option and laying on of the Apoſtles hands, is inadmiſſible. What power could there have been in the Apoſtles, or in their prayers, or what energy in the ceremony of the laying on of their hands on the diſciples, to have effected ſuch a marvellous operation? All theſe things complexly conſidered, could not have availed any thing in a matter which immediately reſpected the act of God, *to wit*, the communicative operation of his ſpirit on his diſciples, which, according to the conſtitution of human nature, is contradictory and impoſſible; for that the divine ſpirit or any meer ſpirit, cannot operate on or co-operate with our ſpirits without the intervention of a material being, ſo as to communicate any perceptions to us, as argued at large in chapter ſixth.

But admitting thoſe arguments to be inconcluſive, and that the immediate communication or gift of the holy ſpirit to our ſpirits, independent of the interpoſition of intermediate cauſes, is in nature poſſible, yet to ſuppoſe that the prayers, ceremonies, or exertions of mere creatures, in the inſtance of the gift of the ſpirit to the diſciples, ſhould have altered the providence of God, or induced him to have done that which otherwiſe he would not have done, in that or any other inſtance, would be the ſame as to ſuppoſe, that ſo far the providence of God was eclipſed, defeated or nullified by the interpoſition or agency of the Apoſtles: and as this ſubject has been fully argued in the ſixth ſection of the ſeventh chapter, the reader is thereto referred for a more copious diſquiſition of it.

The ſpirit of God is that which conſtitutes the divine eſſence, and makes him to be what he is; but that he ſhould be dictated, or his ſpirit be communicated by any acts or ceremonies of the Apoſtles, is by no means admiſſible: For ſuch exertions of the Apoſtles, ſo far as they may be ſuppoſed to communicate the holy ſpirit to their diſciples, would have made God paſſive in the premiſed act of the gift of the ſpirit: for it muſt have been either the immediate act of God or of the

Apoſtles, and if it was the immediate act of the one, it could not have been the immediate act of the other.

To ſuppoſe that the act of the gift of the ſpirit was the mere act of God, and at the ſame time the mere act of the Apoſtles, are prepoſitions diametrically oppoſed to each other, and cannot both be true. But it may be ſuppoſed that the gift of the ſpirit was partly the act of God and partly the act of the apoſtles; admitting this to have been the caſe the conſequence would follow, that the act of the gift of the ſpirit was partly divine and partly human, and therefore the benificence and glory of the grant of the gift of the ſpirit unto the diſciples, would belong partly to God and partly to the Apoſtles, and in an exact proportion to that which God and they may be ſuppoſed to have reſpectively contributed, towards the marvelous act of the gift of the ſpirit. But that God ſhould act in partnerſhip with man, or ſhare his providence and glory with him, is too abſurd to demand argumentative confutation, eſpecially in an act which immediately reſpects the diſplay or exertion of the divine ſpirit on the ſpirits of men.

There is a material diſtinction which ought to be made between the immediate and mediate act of God: the latter reſpects the ſeries of nature's operations, and the former the creation, ſupport and regulation of it.

WHAT I mean by the mediate act of God, is the ſame as the eternal ſeries of the exertions of the various parts of nature on each other, which, properly ſpeaking, act intermediately, or between the eternal cauſe and the ſucceeding or final event of things; ſo that the mediate act of God, is defined to be nothing more or leſs, than the mere operations of nature, which act by ſucceſſion, and are the complicated exertions of created beings. But the eternal cauſe cannot act by ſucceſſion, but is one eternal, infinite and uncompounded exertion of God, giving being, order and ſupport to the univerſe, and cannot admit of beginning, ſucceſſion or limitation; ſo that there could have been no new or ſucceeding act of God, which is the ſame as an immediate exertion of the Holy Ghoſt on the diſciples: For if the laying on of the Apoſtle's hands upon the diſciples, or their prayers, or ceremonies, cauſed the immediate act of the gift of the Spirit of God, it would have ſubverted the order of nature, and made the Apoſtles the efficient cauſe of the act of the gift of the ſpirit; and the premiſed immediate act of God therein, would have been tranſpoſed into the order of dependent cauſes, and inſtead of being the mover would have been the moved.

Furthermore, to ſuppoſe the act of the gift of the ſpirit to the diſciples, to have originated from, and to have been the immediate act of God, it muſt have been miraculous; as it would imply a divine exertion, which was not comprized in the eternal eſtabliſhment of things, but took place at a certain ſubſequent æra of the world, according to the order of time, and not in the order of the ſeries of natural cauſes, but from the immediate act of God himſelf. That there cannot be any ſucceſſion in the immediate act of God, has been particularly urged in the preceding chapter, and is applicable in the caſe of the premiſed act of the gift of the ſpirit: For if we admit of an immediate act of God in the days of the Apoſtles, it would ſucceed the eternal act of God in creating, ordering and ſuſtaining the univerſe, which, if perfectly done, could not admit of a ſucceeding immediate act or acts of God.

To ſuppoſe God in his order of nature to have mediately produced a race of creatures which we call man, and that they ſtand in need of the immediate exertion of the energy of the divine ſpirit upon theirs, would be the ſame as to ſuppoſe, that until that miraculous operation of the divine ſpirit, God had not perfected his workmanſhip of the nature and ſalvation of man. Furthermore, provided the gift of the Holy Ghoſt was requiſite to any part of mankind, it would be ſo to the whole, and on the proviſo that it has ever been conferred on any, God could not act conſiſtent with himſelf, or the wants of his creatures, without a univerſal effuſion of it to mankind: but the doctrine of a partial effuſion ſeems to be the pride of the elect. It appears, that the diſciples, of whom we have been frequently ſpeaking, were unacquainted with the ſpiritual matters then beginning to be in vogue with ſome people, as may be learned from their anſwer to the apoſtle's interrogating them reſpecting their receiving the Holy Ghoſt; "*And they ſaid unto him, we have not ſo much as heard, whether there be any Holy Ghoſt.*" It was a new doctrine, and that of a ſupernatural kind; and it is natural to ſuppoſe, that the diſciples were overawed at the expectation of receiving the heavenly infuſion; which, together with the ſanctimonious parade and ceremonies of the apoſtles, could not have failed to have heightened their ſurprize. Their minds thus agitated with hope, fear and religious curioſity, which compounded together might produce the feelings of enthuſiaſtical conceit, and the apoſtles at the ſame time inſinuating that it was the Holy Ghoſt, the diſciples moſt probably might have imagined it to have been a fact.

Such deluſions have taken place in every age of the world ſince hiſtory has attained to any conſiderable degree of intelligence; nor is there at preſent a nation on earth, but what is more or leſs infatuated with deluſory notions of the immediate influence of good or evil ſpirits on their minds. A recent inſtance of it appears in the Elect Lady (as ſhe has ſeen fit to ſtile herſelf) and her followers, called Shakers; this pretended holy woman began her religious ſcheme at Conneſtaguna, in the Northweſtardly part of the ſtate of New-York, about the year 1763, and has added a new ſectary to the religious catalogue. After having inſtilled her tenets among the Conneſtagunites, and the adjacent inhabitants, ſhe rambled into ſeveral parts of the country, promulgating her religion, and has gained a conſiderable number of ſcattering proſelytes, not only in the ſtate of New York, but ſome in the New-England ſtates. She has ſo wrought on the minds of her female devotees, reſpecting the fading nature, vanity and tempting alurements of their ornaments (which by the by are not plenty among her followers) and the deceitfulneſs of riches, that ſhe has procured from them a conſiderable number of ſtrings of gold beads, and jewels and amaſſed a ſmall treaſure; and like moſt ſecta- es engroſſes the kingdom of heaven to herſelf nd her followers, to the ſecluſion of all others. he gives out that her miſſion is immediately rom heaven, that ſhe travails in pain for er elect, and pretends to talk in ſeventy two unknown languages, in which ſhe converſes with thoſe who have departed this life, and ſays, that there has not been a true church on earth ſince the apoſtles days until ſhe had erected hers. That both the living and the dead muſt be ſaved in, by, and through her, and that they muſt confeſs their ſins unto her and procure her pardon, or they cannot be ſaved. That every of the human race, who have died ſince the apoſtle's time, until her church was ſet up, has been damned, and that they are continually making interceſſion to her for ſalvation, which is the occaſion of her talking to them in thoſe unknown tongues; and that ſhe gathers her elect from earth and hell. She wholly refuſes to give a reaſon for what ſhe does or ſays; but ſays that it is the duty of mankind to believe in her, and receive her inſtructions, for that they are infallible.

FOR a time ſhe prohibited her diſciples from propagating their ſpecies, but ſoon after gave them ample licence, reſtricting them, indiſcriminately, to the pale of her ſanctified church, for that ſhe needed more ſouls to compleat the number of her elect. Among other things, ſhe inſtructs thoſe who are young and ſpritely among her pupils, to practiſe the moſt wild, freakiſh, wanton and romantic geſtures, as that of indecently, ſtriping themſelves, twirling round, extorting their features, ſhaking and twitching their bodies and limbs into a variety of odd and unuſal ways, and many other extravagancies of external behavior, in the practice of which they are ſaid to be very alert even to the aſtoniſhment of ſpectators, having by uſe acquired an uncommon agility in ſuch twirling, freakiſh and romantic practices : The old lady having ſuch an aſcendency over them as to make them believe that thoſe extravagant actions were occaſioned by the immediate power of God, it ſerves among them as a proof of the divinity of her doctrines.

A MORE particular account of this new ſectary has been lately publiſhed in a pamphlet by a Mr. Rathburn, who, as he relates, was, for a time, one of her deluded diſciples, but after a while apoſtatiſed from the faith, and has ſince announced to the world the particulars of their doctrines and conduct.

Probably there never was any people or country, ſince the æra of hiſtorical knowledge, who were more confident than they that they are acted upon by the immediate agency of the divine ſpirit; and as they are facts now exiſting in a conſiderable tract of country, and are notoriouſly known in this part of America, I take the liberty to mention them, as a knowledge of theſe facts, together with the concurrent teſtimony of the hiſtory of ſuch deceptions in all ages and nations, might induce my countrymen to examine ſtrictly into the claim and reality of ghoſtly intelligence in general.

Chapter

Chapter IX.

SECTION I.

Of the Nature of FAITH *and wherein it conſiſts.*

FAITH in Jeſus Chriſt and in his Goſpel throughout the New-Teſtament, is repreſented to be an eſſential condition of the eternal ſalvation of mankind. "*Knowing that a man is not juſtified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jeſus Chriſt, even we have believed in Jeſus Chriſt, that we might be juſtified by the faith of Chriſt, and not by the works of the law, for by the works of the law ſhall no fleſh be juſtified.*" Again, "*If thou ſhalt confeſs the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, and believe in thine heart that God hath raiſed him from the dead, thou mayeſt be ſaved.*" And again, "*He that believeth and is baptiſed ſhall be* *ſaved, but he that believeth not ſhall be damned*'. Faith is the laſt reſult of the underſtanding, or the ſame which we call the concluſion, it is the conſequence of a greater or leſs deduction of reaſoning from certain premiſes previouſly laid down; it is the ſame as believing or judging of any matter of fact, or aſſenting to or diſſenting from the truth of any doctrine, ſyſtem or poſition; ſo that to form a judgment, or come to a determination in one's own mind, or to believe, or to have faith, is in reality the ſame thing, and is ſynonymouſly applied both in writing and ſpeaking; for example, "*Abraham believed in God.*" Again, "*for he,*" ſpeaking of Abraham, "*judged him faithful who had promiſed.*" and again, "*his faith was counted unto him for righteouſneſs.*" It is not only in ſcripture that we meet with examples of the three words, to wit, belief, judgment and faith, to ſtand for the marks of our ideas for the ſame thing, but alſo all intelligible writers and ſpeakers, apply theſe phraſes ſynonimouſly, and it would be good grammar and ſenſe for us to ſay that we have faith in a univerſal providence, or that we believe in a univerſal providence, or that we judge that there is a univerſal providence. Theſe three different phraſes, in communicating our ideas of providence, do every of them exhibit the ſame idea, to all perſons of common underſtanding, who are acquainted with the Engliſh Language. In fine every one's experience may convince them, that they cannot aſſent to,or diſſent from the truth of any matter of fact, doctrine or prepoſition whatever, contrary to their judgment; for the act of the mind in aſſenting to, or diſſenting from any poſition, or in having faith or belief in favor of, or againſt any doctrine, ſyſtem or propoſition, could not amount to any thing more or leſs, than the act of the judgment, or laſt dictate of the underſtanding, whether the underſtanding be ſuppoſed to be rightly informed or not; ſo that our faith in all caſes is as liable to err, as our reaſon is to miſjudge of the truth; and our minds act faith in diſbelieving any doctrine or ſyſtem of religion to be true, as much as in believing it to be ſo. From hence it appears, that the mind cannot act faith in oppoſition to its judgment, but that it is the reſolution of the underſtanding itſelf committed to memory or writing, and can never be conſidered diſtinct from it. And inaſmuch as faith neceſſarily reſults from reaſoning, forcing itſelf upon our minds by the evidence of truth, or the miſtaken apprehenſion of it, without any act of choice of ours, there cannot be any thing, which pertains to,or partakes of the nature of moral good or evil in it. For us to believe ſuch doctrines or ſyſtems of religion, as appear to be credibly recommended to our reaſon, can no more partake of the nature of goodneſs or morality, than our natural eyes may be ſuppoſed to partake of it in their perception of colours ; for the faith of the mind, and the ſight of the eye are both of them neceſſary conſequences, the one reſults from the reaſonings of the mind, and the other from the perception of the eye. To ſuppoſe a rational mind without the exerciſe of faith, would be as abſurd as to ſuppoſe a proper and compleat eye without ſight, or the perception of the common objects of that ſenſe. The ſhort of the matter is this, that without reaſon we could not have faith, and without the eye or eyes we could not ſee. but once admitting that we are rational, faith follows of courſe, naturally reſulting from the dictates of reaſon.

FURTHERMORE, It is obſervable, that in all caſes wherein reaſon makes an erroneous concluſion, faith is likewiſe erroneous, and that in the ſame proportion as the concluſion may be ſuppoſed to be faulty and irregular : for it is the eſtabliſhed order of human nature, that faith ſhould always conform to the decrees of the judgment, whether it be right or wrong, or partly both. From hence it follows, that errors in faith, and conſequently in practice, are more or leſs unavoidable. We are therefore obliged to ſubſtitute ſincerity in the place of knowledge, in all caſes wherein knowledge is not attainable, for we cannot look into the eternal order of unerring reaſon and perfect rectitude, ſo as in all caſes to regulate our minds and conſciences from thence. We muſt therefore adopt the principle of ſincerity, ſince it is always ſuppoſed to aim at perfection, and to come as near it as the infirmities of our nature will admit, (for otherwiſe it could not be ſincerity) which is the higheſt pretenſion to goodneſs, that we can lawfully aſpire to. There are therefore good or bad deſigns and intentions, which crown all our actions, and denominate them to be either good or bad, virtuous or vicious. Thoſe who are vicious and abandoned to wickedneſs, may, and often do, poſſeſs more knowledge, and conſequently a more extenſive faith than thoſe who are ignorant and virtuous: their ſin does not conſiſt in the want of underſtanding or faith, but in their omiſſion of cultivating in their own minds the love and practice of virtue, or in not bringing their deſigns, intentions, diſpoſitions and habits to a conformity thereto. A good conſcience, predicated on knowledge as far as that is attainable, and on ſincerity for the reſt of our conduct, always was and will be eſſential to a rational happineſs, which reſults from a conſciouſneſs of moral rectitude, and thus it is that mankind, by ſeeking after the truth, and conforming (as far as human frailty will permit) to moral rectitude, may attain to the enjoyment of a good conſcience, although in doctrinal or ſpeculative points of religion, or in creeds, they may be ſuppoſed to be ever ſo erroneous.

SECTION II.

Of *the Traditions of our Forefathers.*

IT may be objected, that the far greater part of mankind believe according to the tradition of their forefathers, without examining into the grounds of it, and that argumentative deductions from the reaſon and nature of things, have, with the bulk of them, but little or no influence on their faith. Admitting this to have been too much the caſe, and that many of them have been blameable for the omiſſion of cultivating or improving their reaſon, and for not forming a better judgment concerning their reſpective traditions, or a juſter and more exalted faith; yet this does not at all invalidate the foregoing arguments reſpecting the nature of faith: for though it be admitted that moſt of the human race do not, or will not reaſon, with any conſiderable degree of propriety, on the traditions of their forefathers, but receive them implicitly, they nevertheleſs eſtabliſh this one propoſition in their minds, right or wrong, *that their reſpective traditions are right*, for none could believe in them were they poſſeſſed of the knowledge that they were wrong. And as we have a natural bias in favor of our progenitors, to whoſe memory a tribute of regard is juſtly due, and whoſe care in handing down from father to ſon ſuch notions of religion and manners, as they ſuppoſed would be for the well being and happineſs of their poſterity in this and the coming world, naturally endears tradition to us, and prompts us to receive and venerate it. Add to this, that the prieſts of every denomination are "*inſtant in ſeaſon and out of ſeaſon*," in inculcating and inſtilling the ſame tenets, which, with the foregoing conſiderations, induces mankind in general to give at leaſt a tacit conſent to their reſpective traditions, and without a thorough inveſtigation thereof, believe them to be right and very commonly infallible, although their examinations are not attended with argumentative reaſonings, from the nature of things; and in the ſame proportion as they may be ſuppoſed to fall ſhort of concluſive arguing on their reſpective traditions they cannot fail to be deceived in the rationality of their faith.

But after all it may be that ſome of the human race may have been traditionally or accidentally right, in many or moſt reſpects: Admitting it to be ſo, yet they cannot have any rational enjoyment of it, or underſtand wherein the truth of the premiſed right tradition conſiſts, or deduce any more ſatisfaction from it, than others whoſe traditions may be ſuppoſed to be wrong; for it is the knowledge of the diſcovery of truth alone, which is gratifying to that mind who contemplates its ſuperlative beauty.

That tradition has had a powerful influence on the human mind is univerſally admitted, even by thoſe who are governed by it in the articles or diſcipline of their faith; for though they are blind with reſpect to their own ſuperſtition, yet they can perceive and deſpiſe it in others. Proteſtants very readily diſcern and expoſe the weak ſide of Popery, and papiſts are as ready and acute in diſcovering the errors of heretics. With equal facility do Chriſtians and Mahometans ſpy out each others inconſiſtencies, and both have an admirable ſagacity to deſcry the ſuperſtition of the heathen nations. Nor are the Jews wholly ſilent in this matter; "*O God the heathen are come into thine inheritance, thy holy temple have they defiled.*" What abomination muſt this have been in the opinion of a nation who had monopolized all religion to themſelves! Monſtrous vile Heathen, that they ſhould preſume to approach the *ſanctum ſanctorum!* The Chriſtians call the Mahometans by the odious name of infidels, but the Muſſelmen, in their opinion, cannot call the Chriſtians by a worſe name than that which they have given themſelves, they therefore call them *Chriſtians.*

WHAT has been already obſerved upon tradition, is ſufficient to admoniſh us of its errors and ſuperſtitions, and the prejudices to which a bigoted attachment thereto expoſes us, to which is abundantly ſufficient to excite us to a careful examination of our reſpective traditions, and not to reſt ſatisfied until we have regulated our faith by reaſon.

SECTION III.

Our Faith is governed by our Reaſonings, whether they are ſuppoſed to be concluſive or inconcluſive, and not merely by our own Choice.

IT is written that "*Faith is the gift of God.*" Be it ſo, but is faith any more the gift of God than reflection, memory or reaſon are his gifts? Was it not for memory, we could not retain in our minds, the judgment which we have paſſed upon things, and was it not for reaſoning, in either a regular or irregular manner, or partly both, there could be no ſuch thing as judging or believing; ſo that God could not beſtow the gift of faith ſeperate from the gift of reaſon, faith being the mere conſequence of reaſoning, either right or wrong, or in a greater or leſs degree, as has been previouſly argued.

STILL there is a knotty text of ſcripture to ſurmount, viz. "*He that believeth ſhall be ſaved, but he that believeth not ſhall be damned.*" This text is conſidered as crouding "*damned*" hard upon unbelievers in Chriſtianity; but when it is critically examined, it will be found not to militate at all againſt them, but is merely a Jeſuitical fetch to overawe ſome and make others wonder. We will premiſe, that an unbeliever is deſtitute of faith, which is the cauſe of his being thus denominated. The Chriſtian believes the Goſpel to be true and of divine authority, the Deiſt believes that it is not true and not of divine authority; ſo that the Chriſtian and Deiſt are both of them believers, and according to the expreſs words of the text "*ſhall be ſaved,*" and a Deiſt may as well retort upon a Chriſtian and call him an infidel, becauſe he differs in faith from him, as the Chriſtian may upon the Deiſt; for there is the ſame impropriety in applying the cant of infidelity to either, as both are believers; and it is impoſſible for us to believe contrary to our judgments or the dictates of our underſtanding, whether it be rightly informed or not. Why then may there not in both denominations be honeſt men, who are ſeeking after the truth, and who may have an equal right to expect the favour and ſalvation of God.

BUT if the foregoing expoſition of the text ſhould be diſſatisfactory to Chriſtians, and they ſhould ſtill be of opinion that themſelves only have an excluſive right to the title of believers, and that thoſe who diſbelieve Chriſtianity (believe whatever elſe they will) muſt inevitably be damned, and that merely in conſequence of ſuch their unbelief; I ſhall diſpute the juſtice of it, and appeal to the deciſion of the righteous judge of the univerſe: In the mean time I offer it as my candid opinion, that a proffer of religion to mankind, which tenders ſalvation to them, merely upon condition of believing it, *alias* its teachers, and which dooms all thoſe who diſbelieve it to damnation, has too much the appearance of human craft, and ought to be ſuſpected as to its divinity, and rejected; being utterly incompatible with the nature of faith, as has been before argued, and alſo with the moral perfections of God.

It is frequently objected by believers in the Chriſtian ſyſtem, againſt the Deiſts, that provided Chriſtianity ſhould eventually turn out to be true, then they have God's word for it, that "*he that believeth not ſhall be damned,*" whereas, on the contrary, both Chriſtians and Deiſts, upon the principles of the law of nature, will be admitted to future proficiency in knowledge, faith and action, and to ſuch a ſalvation as the Law of Nature may admit of; from hence the Chriſtians infer, that at leaſt it is moſt prudent to be a Chriſtian. But it ought to be conſidered, that we cannot believe or diſbelieve contrary to the reſult of the evidence for and againſt Chriſtianity, as it appears to us upon deliberation. All that we have to do, as rational and accountable creatures, is to govern our aſſent to or diſſent from it by reaſon and candid argument; and are by no means left at looſe from the evidence originating from the reaſon of things, to play politics, and believe or not believe, juſt as we pleaſe, independent of the evidence concerning Chriſtianity; ſo that there is no poſſibility in nature for the exerciſe of ſuch a prudent or political faith: our minds muſt be determined in all matters by our reaſonings, whether they are concluſive or otherwiſe; for mere traditional faith has its inconcluſive arguments for its ſupport, viz. father believed and ſo did the parſon of the pariſh and they were very good men and are both gone to Heaven, *ergo*, I will believe too, that I may go to Heaven alſo.

But after all that has been ſaid on this ſubject, provided that "*he that believeth not*," in Chriſtianity "*ſhall be damned*," what will become of the Deiſts? Why to be honeſt about the matter, I ſuppoſe, that on this poſition they will be damned ſure enough: Which may be a gratification to ſome believers, when all other arguments fail them.

Chapter

Chapter X.

SECTION I.

A Trinity of Perſons cannot exiſt in the Divine Eſſence, whether the Perſons be ſuppoſed to be finite or infinite: With Remarks on St. Athenaſius's Creed.

OF all the errors which have taken place in religion, none have been ſo fatal to it as thoſe that immediately reſpect the divine nature. Wrong notions of a God, or of his Providence, ſap its very foundation in theory and practice, as is evident from the ſuperſtition diſcoverable among the major part of mankind; who, inſtead of worſhipping the true God, have been by ſome means or other infatuated to pay divine homage to *mere creatures*, or to idols made with hands, or to ſuch as have no exiſtence but in their own fertile imaginations.

God being incomprehenſible to us, we cannot underſtand all that perfection in which the Divine Eſſence conſiſts; we can nevertherleſs (negatively) comprehend many things, in which (poſitively) the divine eſſence does not and cannot conſiſt.

That it does not conſiſt of three perſons, or of any other number of perſons, is as eaſily demonſtrated, as that *the whole* is *bigger* than a *part*, or any other propoſition in mathematics.

We will premiſe, that the three perſons in the ſuppoſed Trinity are either finite or infinite; for there cannot in the ſcale of being be a third ſort of beings between theſe two; for ever ſo many and exalted degrees in finiteneſs is ſtill finite, and that being who is infinite admits of no degrees or enlargement; and as all beings whatever muſt be limitted or unlimited, perfect or imperfect, they muſt therefore be denominated to be finite or infinite: we will therefore premiſe the three perſons in the Trinity to be merely finite, conſidered perſonally and individually from each other, and the queſtion would ariſe, whether the ſuppoſed trinity of finites though united in one eſſence, could be more than finite ſtill. Inaſmuch as three imperfect and circumſcribed beings united together, could not conſtitute a being perfect or infinite, any more than abſolute perfection could conſiſt of three imperfections; which would be the ſame as to ſuppoſe that infinity could be made up or compounded of finiteneſs; or that abſolute, uncreated and infinite perfection, could conſiſt of three perſonal and imperfect natures. But on the other hand, to conſider every of the three perſons in the ſuppoſed Trinity, as being abſolutely infinite, it would be a downright contradiction to one infinite and all comprehending eſſence. Admitting that God the father is infinite, it would neceſſarily preclude the ſuppoſed God the Son, and God the Holy Ghoſt from the god-head, or eſſence of God; one infinite eſſence comprehending every power, excellency and perfection, which can poſſibly exiſt in the divine nature. Was it poſſible that three abſolute infinites, which is the ſame as three Gods, could be contained in one and the ſelf-ſame eſſence, why not as well any other number of infinites? But as certain as infinity cannot admit of addition, ſo certain a plurality of infinites cannot exiſt in the ſame eſſence; for real infinity is ſtrict and abſolute infinity, and only that, and cannot be compounded of infinites or of parts, but forecloſes all addition. A perſonal or circumſcribed God, implies as great and manifeſt a contradiction as the mind of man can conceive of; it is the ſame as a limitted omnipreſence, a weak Almighty, or a finite God.

FROM the foregoing arguments on the trinity, we infer, that the divine eſſence cannot conſiſt of a trinity of perſons, whether they are ſuppoſed to be either finite or infinite.

THE Creedmongers have exhibited the doctrine of the Trinity in an alarming point of light, viz. "*Whoever would be ſaved, before all things it is neceſſary that he hold the catholic faith, which faith, except every one doth keep whole and undefiled, without doubt he ſhall periſh everlaſtingly.*" We next proceed to the doctrine, "*The father is eternal, the ſon is eternal, and the holy ghoſt is eternal, and yet there are not three eternals but one eternal.*" The plain Engliſh is, that the three perſons in the trinity are three eternals, individually conſidered, and yet they are not three eternals but one eternal.

To ſay that there are three eternals in the trinity, and yet that there are not three eternals therein, is a contradiction in terms, as much as to ſay, that there are three perſons in the trinity and yet there are not three perſons in the trinity.

The firſt propoſition in the creed affirms, that "*the Father is eternal,*" the ſecond affirms that "*the Son is eternal,*" the third affirms that "*the Holy Ghoſt is eternal,*" the fourth affirms that "*there are not three eternals,*" and the fifth that there is "*but one eternal.*"

The reader will obſerve, that the three firſt propoſitions are denied by the fourth, which denies that there are three eternals, though the three firſt prepoſitions affirmed, that there were three eternals by name; *viz.* The Father, Son and Holy Ghoſt. The fifth propoſition is unconnected with either of the former, and is undoubtedly true; *viz.* "*but there is one eternal.*" "*The Father is God, The Son is God, and the Holy Ghoſt is God, and yet there are not three Gods but one God.*" Here again we have three God's by name, affirmed to have an exiſtence by the three firſt propoſitions, by the fourth they are negatived, and the fifth affirms the truth again, viz. that there is "*but one God.*"

Admitting the three firſt propoſitions to be true, *to wit,* that there are three Gods, the three could not be one and the ſame God, any more than Diana, Dagon and Moloch, may be ſuppoſed to be the ſame; and if three Gods, their eſſences and providences would interfere, and make univerſal confuſion and diſorder.

"*The Father is Almighty, the Son is Almighty, and the Holy Ghoſt is Almighty, and yet there are not three Almighties but one Almighty.*" Here we have three Almighties and at the ſame time but one Almighty. So that the point at iſſue is brought to this ſimple queſtion, *viz.* whether three units can be one, or one unit three, or not? Which is ſubmitted to the curious to determine. Our creed further informs us, that the three perſons in the Trinity are co-eternal together and co-equal, but in its ſequel we are told that one was begotten of the other; and when we advert to the hiſtory of that tranſaction, we find it to be not quite eighteenhundred years ago, and took place in the reign of Herod, the King of Judea, which faith, except "*we keep whole and undefiled,*" we have a threat, that "*without doubt we ſhall periſh everlaſtingly.*"

SECTION II.

Eſſence being the Cauſe of Identity, is inconſiſtent with Perſonality in the Divine Nature.

ONE God can have but one eſſence, which muſt have been eternal and infinite, and for that reaſon precludes all others from a participation of his nature, glory, and univerſal and abſolute perfection.

When we ſpeak of any being who by nature is capable of being rightfully denominated an individual, we conceive of it to exiſt in but one eſſence; ſo that eſſence as applied to God, denominates the divine nature; and as applied to man, it denotes an individual: for although the human race is with propriety denominated the race of man, and though every male of the ſpecies, is with equal propriety called man, for that they partake of one common ſort of nature and likeneſs, yet the reſpective individuals are not one and the ſame. The perſon of A is not the perſon of B, nor are they conſcious of each others conſciouſneſs, and therefore the joy or grief of A, is not and cannot be the joy or grief of B; this is what we know to be a fact from our own experience. The reaſon of this perſonal diſtinction is founded in nature, for though we partake of one common nature and likeneſs, yet we do not partake of one and the ſame eſſence. Eſſence is therefore, in the order of nature, the primary cauſe of identity or ſameneſs and cannot be divided.

The eſſence of any beings is that by which they are diſtinguiſhed from each other, and which conſtitutes and gives being to identity itſelf. A more downright contradiction cannot be expreſſed in words than to affirm, that three perſons do each and every of them pertain to one and the ſame eſſence; for was it ſo, the conſciouſneſs of the one would be the conſciouſneſs of the other without diſtinction; nor would it be poſſible for them to have a ſeperate knowledge, intereſt, or conſciouſneſs; but their premiſed plurality of perſons and being, would be ſwallowed up and loſt in one eſſence and individuality. So that their actions, intereſt, honor, happineſs or miſery, would be all one and the ſame, as much as their eſſence may be ſuppoſed to be: or, in fine, it would conſtitute a compleat identity.

Now, inaſmuch as we know, from our own experience, that three perſons cannot exiſt in one eſſence, how unreaſonable is it to aſcribe a trinity of perſons to the divine nature; which, if admitted to be true, overturns all our notions of identity; for if three perſons are one and the ſame, they can no more be three, than three units may be one, or one may be three, which is mathematically impoſſible.

It is as contradictory that three perſons ſhould exiſt in one eſſence, as that three eſſences ſhould exiſt in one perſon, when at the ſame time eſſence is the identical nature of a perſon and makes him to be eſſentially what he is; or is the very conſciouſneſs or quinteſſence of him, comprehending all that by reaſon of which he is not ſomething elſe, which is a juſt idea of identity, and therefore cannot conſiſt of an aggregate aſſemblage of diſtinct natures, and conſequently cannot conſiſt of more perſons or eſſences than one: For no perſon can have a poſitive exiſtence without an eſſence, this being the ſame as to exiſt without an exiſtence, eſſence being eſſential to exiſtence itſelf.

But ſhould we, for argument ſake, admit, that there are three perſons, and conſequently three eſſences in the Godhead, then it would follow, that they could not be privy to, or conſcious of each others conſciouſneſs: for if they were, it would reduce the three ſuppoſed eſſences, and conſequently the trinity of perſons, into one eſſence only, for conſciouſneſs proceeds from identity of eſſence, without diſtinction of perſons, and includes the divine nature in one entire and infinite eſſence, which cannot admit of parts or units, but is infinitely removed from perſonality. But on the contrary, provided the three premiſed perſons in the Trinity, are not privy to or conſcious of each others conſciouſneſs, it would reduce the omniſcience of the ſuppoſed Trinity to a finite comprehenſion, ſo that if the three perſons in the premiſed Trinity, are not privy to, or conſcious of each other's conſciouſneſs, it would neceſſarily imply imperfection in knowledge, and conſequently in government,

vernment, and each of the perfections of a God, and therefore precludes the trinity from the eſſence of God.

THE three ſuppoſed perſons in the Trinity muſt be conſcious of each other's conſciouſneſs, or not conſcious of it; if they are ſuppoſed to be conſcious thereof it would amount to but one entire conſciouſneſs, and would be comprehended in one and the ſame eſſence, as before argued, and foreclose the trinity of perſons from the divine eſſence. But if there be in the trinity a perſonal and diſtinct conſciouſneſs, of which each other are not conſcious, they would conſtitute but three finite minds, a trinity of which would fall infinitely ſhort of a God.

FROM hence we infer, that the doctrine of the Trinity is deſtitute of foundation, and tends manifeſtly to ſuperſtition and idolatry.

SECTION III.

The imperfection of Knowledge in the Perſon of Jeſus Chriſt, incompatible with his Divinity, with Obſervations on the Hypoſtatical Union of the Divine and Human Nature.

THAT Jeſus Chriſt was not God is evident from his own words, where, ſpeaking of the day of judgment, he ſays, "*Of that day and hour knoweth no man, no not the angels which are in Heaven, neither the Son, but the Father.* This is giving up all pretenſion to divinity, and acknowledging in the moſt explicit manner, that he did not know all things, but compares his underſtanding to that of man and of angels; "*of that day and hour knoweth no man, no not the angels which are in heaven, neither the ſon.*" Thus he ranks himſelf with finite beings, and with them acknowledges, that he did not know the day and hour of judgment, and at the ſame time aſcribes a ſuperiority of knowledge to the father, for that he knew the day and hour of judgment.

That he was a mere creature is further evident from his prayer to the father, ſaying, "*Father if it be poſſible, let this cup paſs from me, nevertheleſs, not my will but thine be done.*" Theſe expreſſions ſpeak forth the moſt humble ſubmiſſion to his father's will, authority and government, and however becoming ſo ſubmiſſive a diſpoſition to the divine government would be, in a creature, it is utterly inconſiſtent and unworthy of a God, or of the perſon of Jeſus Chriſt, admitting him to have been a divine perſon, or of the eſſence of God.

WHAT notions can we entertain that the divine eſſence ſhould be divided, and one part aſſume an authority over the other; or that the other ſhould yield obedience; this is a contradiction, inaſmuch as eſſence cannot be divided, but is the ſame, without diſtinction, either in its nature, authority or government.

To ſuppoſe one part of the divine nature to exerciſe authority over another, is the ſame as to ſuppoſe, that part of the eſſence of God was weak and imperfect, and not capable of holding a ſhare in the divine government, which would reduce it to the ſtate and condition of a creature, and diveſt it of its divinity. Nor would the conſequences of ſuch a ſuppoſed imperfection in the eſſence of God end here, but would neceſſarily involve the divine nature, in weakneſs, miſery and imperfection; and extinguiſh every idea of the exiſtence of a God: This is the neceſſary conſequence of deifying Chriſt. But if Jeſus Chriſt was not of the eſſence of God, he muſt have been a mere creature; as there cannot be any being but who is either finite or infinite, as has been before argued.

BUT we are told of a hypoſtatical union of the divine and human nature. But wherein does it conſiſt? Does it unite the two natures ſo as to include the human nature in the eſſence of God? If it does not it does not deify the perſon of Chriſt; for the eſſence of God is that which makes him to be what he is; but if the hypoſtatical union includes human nature in the divine, then there would be an addition of the human nature to the eſſence of God, in which caſe the divine nature would be no longer perfectly ſimple, but compounded, and would be diverſe from what it may be ſuppoſed to have been the eternity preceding ſuch premiſed union; in which connection the divine nature muſt have changed from its eternal identity. He could not be the ſame God he was previous to his union with humanity; for if the union of natures is ſuppoſed to have made no alteration in the divine eſſence, it is a contradiction to call it a union; for the hypoſtatical union muſt be ſuppoſed to be ſomething or nothing, if it be nothing, then there is no ſuch union, but if it is any thing real, it neceſſarily produces mutability in the divine nature. Now, if the divine nature was eternally perfect and compleat, it could not receive the addition of the nature of man, but if it was not perfect in the eternity preceding the premiſed hypoſtatical union, it could not have been perfected by the addition of another imperfection.

The doctrine of the *incarnation* itſelf, and the *virgin mother*, does not merit a ſerious confutation and therefore is paſſed in ſilence, except the mere mention of it.

Chapter

Chapter XI.

SECTION I.

OBSERVATIONS *on the State of* MAN, *in* MOSES'*s* PARADISE, *on the* TREE OF KNOWLEDGE OF GOOD AND EVIL, *and on the* TREE OF LIFE: *with Speculations on the* DIVINE PROHIBITION *to* MAN, *not to eat of the fruit of the former of thoſe Trees, interſperſed with Remarks on the* MORTALITY *of* INNOCENT MAN.

THE mortality of animal life, and the diſſolution of that of the vegetable, has been particularly conſidered in chapter 3, ſection 4, treating on phyſical evils. We now proceed to make an application of thoſe arguments, in the caſe of our reputed firſt parents, whoſe mortality is repreſented

preſented by Moſes to have taken place in conſequence of their eating of the forbidden fruit.

Moses, in his deſcription of the garden of Eden acquaints us with two chimerical kinds of fruit trees, which, among others, he tells us were planted by God in the place appointed for the reſidence of the new made couple; the one he calls by the name of "*the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil,*" and the other by the name of "*the Tree of Life.*" And previous to his account of the apoſtacy, he informs us, that God expreſsly commanded the man and woman, ſaying, "*be fruitful and multiply and repleniſh the earth and ſubdue it, and have dominion over the fiſh of the ſea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth; and God ſaid, behold, I have given you every herb bearing ſeed, which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree, in which is the fruit of a tree yielding ſeed, to you it ſhall be for meat.* Again, "*and the Lord commanded the man ſaying, of every tree of the gaden thou mayeſt freely eat, but of the Tree of Knowledge of good and evil thou ſhalt not eat of it, for in the day that thou eateſt thereof thou ſhalt ſurely die.*" "*And the Lord ſaid, it is not good for man to be alone, I will make him an help meet for him; and the Lord God cauſed a deep ſleep to fall upon Adam, and he ſlept, and he took out one of his ribs, and cloſed* *up the fleſh inſtead thereof, and the rib which the Lord God had taken from man made he a woman.*"

THUS it appears from Moſes's repreſentation of the ſtate of man's innocency, that he was commanded by God to labour, and to repleniſh the earth; and that to him was given the dominion over the creatures, and that at two ſeveral times he was licenced by God himſelf to eat of every of the fruit of the trees, and of the herbage, except of the tree of knowledge of good and evil; and becauſe it was not good that the man ſhould be alone, but that he might multiply and repleniſh the earth, our amorours mother Eve, it ſeems, was formed, who I dare ſay well compenſated father Adam for the loſs of his rib.

THIS ſhort deſcription of man's ſtate and condition in innocency, agrees with the ſtate and circumſtances of human nature at preſent. Innocent man was required to labour and ſubdue the earth, out of which he was to be ſubſiſted; had a licenſe to eat of the fruit of the trees, or herbage of the garden, which pre-ſuppoſeth, that his nature needed refreſhment the ſame as ours does; for otherwiſe it would have been impertinent to have granted him a priviledge incompatable with his nature, as it would have been no priviledge at all, but an outright mockery, except we admit, that innocent human nature was liable to decay, needed nutrition by food, and had the quality of digeſtion and perſpiration; or in fine, had the ſame ſort of nature as we have; for otherwiſe, he could eat but one belly-full, which without digeſtion would remain the ſame, and is too romantic to have been the original end and deſign of eating? And though there is nothing mentioned by Moſes concerning his drinking, yet it is altogether probable, that he had wit enough to drink when he was thirſty. That he conſiſted of animal nature is manifeſt, not only from his being ſubjected to ſubdue the earth, out of which he was to be ſubſiſted, and from his eating and drinking, or his ſuſceptibility of nutrition by food, but alſo from his propenſity to propagate his kind; for which purpoſe a helpmate was made for him.

Nothing could more fully evince, that Moſes's innocent progenitors of mankind, in that State, were of a ſimilar nature to our's, than their ſuſceptibility of propogating the ſpecies; and as they required nutrition, their nature muſt have had the quality or aptitude of digeſtion and perſpiration, and every property that at preſent we aſcribe to an animal nature; from hence we infer, that death, or mortality, muſt have been the neceſſary conſequence. What would have prevented them from having been cruſhed to death by a fall from a precipice, or from ſuffering death by any other caſualty, to which human nature is at preſent liable? will any ſuppoſe that the bodies of thoſe premiſed innocent progenitors of the human race were invulnerable; were they not fleſh and blood? ſurely they were, for otherwiſe they could not have been male and female; as it was written, "*male and female created be them*:" and inaſmuch as animal life has, from its original, conſiſted of the ſame ſort of nature, and been propogated and ſupported in the ſame manner, and obnoxious to the ſame fate, it would undoubtedly, in the premiſed day of Adam, have required the ſame order in the external ſyſtem of nature, which it does at preſent, to anſwer the purpoſes of animal life.

WAS it poſſible that the laws of Nature, which merely reſpect gravatation, could be and were ſuſpended, ſo as not to be influential on matter, our world would be immediately disjointed and out of order, and confuſion would ſucceed its preſent regularity; in the convulſions whereof animal life could not ſubſiſt. So that not only the laws which immediately reſpect animal nature in particular, but the laws which reſpect our ſolar ſyſtem, muſt have been the ſame in man's innocency, as in his whimſically ſuppoſed ſtate of apoſtacy; and conſequently, his mortality the ſame. From hence we infer, that the curſes, which Moſes informs us of in chapter 3: as being by God pronounced upon man, ſaying; "*duſt thou art, and unto duſt thou ſhalt return,*" could not have been any puniſhment, inflicted as a penalty for eating the forbidden fruit; for turn to duſt he muſt have done, whether he ate of it or not; for that death and diſſolution was the inevitable and irreverſible condition of the law of nature, which wholly precludes the curſe, of which Moſes informs us, from having any effect on mankind.

The ſtory of the "*tree of life,*" is unnatural. And their being but one of the kind, it may be called an only tree, the world not having produced another of the ſort; the fruit of which, according to Moſes, had ſuch an efficacious quality, that had Adam and Eve but eaten thereof, they would have lived forever. "*And now leſt he put forth his hand and take alſo of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever.*" To prevent which, they are ſaid to be driven out of the garden, that the eating thereof might not have reverſed the ſentence of God, which he had previouſly pronounced againſt them; denouncing their mortality. "*So he drove out the man, and he placed at the eaſt of the garden of Eden, Cherubims, and a flaming ſword, which turneth every way to keep the way of the tree of life:*" a bite of this fruit it ſeems would have reinſtated mankind, and ſpoiled prieſtcraft. Yet it is obſervable, that there are no travellers or hiſtorians, who have given any accounts of ſuch a tree, or of the Cherubims or flaming ſword, which renders its exiſtence diſputable, and the reality of it doubtful and improbable; the more ſo, as that part of the country, in which it is ſaid to have been planted, has for a long ſucceſſion of ages been populouſly inhabited.

YET it may be objected, that the tree may have rotted down and conſumed by time. But ſuch conjectures derogate from the character of the quality of the tree. It ſeems, that ſo marvelous a tree, the fruit of which would have preſerved animal life eternally, would have laughed at time, and bid defiance to decay and diſſolution, and eternally have remained in its preſtine ſtate under the protection of the flaming ſword, as a perpetual evidence of the divine legation of Moſes, and the reality of man's apoſtacy for ever. But alas! it is no where to be found, it is periſhed from off the face of the earth, and ſuch a marvellous fruit is no more, and conſequently no remedy againſt mortality remains.

ANOTHER part of the Chronicles of Moſes, which demands our ſerious attention and wiſe improvement, we may find recorded in the 2d Chapter of Geneſis at the ninth verſe, the latter clauſe of the verſe. "*The tree of Knowledge alſo of good and evil.*" This tree, if we may credit the hiſtory, appears to be as ſtupenduous in its nature, and in the quality of its fruit, as that of the tree of life, though of a different kind. Some are of opinion, that the eating of this fruit gave our reputed firſt parents to underſtand the diſtinction between moral good and evil, and others, that it could do no more than communicate to them an experiment of natural good and evil.

THAT the premiſed innocent couple acquired the principle of reflection or reaſon by eating of the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, is prepoſterous; for it is the ſame as ſuppoſing, that previous to their eating of that fruit, they were not rational creatures, and if ſo, not accountable for their eating of it, but incapable of agency in the matter of any ſuppoſed command. Nor could their eating of that fruit, on the poſition that they did not know moral good and evil, have amounted to the tranſgreſſion of any law, for "*where there is no law there is no tranſgreſſion.*" Nevertheleſs, the eating of that or of any other fruit, might have given them the experimental knowledge of natural good or evil, for that fruit which is agreeable and rightly adapted to our nature, imparts health, ſtrength and vigor to it, and affords us an experiment of natural good. So on the other hand, that fruit which is diſagreeable and noxious to our nature, impairs our ſtrength, and health, and to us would be an experiment of natural evil. So that natural good or evil might have been the conſequence of our premiſed firſt parents eating of that fruit, as it may have affected themſelves. But ſhould we premiſe, that there was in the forbidden fruit ſuch a baneful quality, that it poioſned the original ſource of human nature, and implanted the ſeeds of mortality, yet it would have reſtricted it to the generation of Adam and Eve to the excluſion of the brutal, and every other part of the univerſal creation, who are equally obnoxious to mortality with mankind. We muſt therefore take a retroſpective ſpeculation into animal nature in general, and ſearch into it from its foundation, and that previous to, and independent of the eating of the forbidden fruit, and by thus exploring the original cauſe of mortality, we at the ſame time include that of man, and conſequently render Moſes's account of it altogether fictitious. For ſhould we admit, that the eating of the forbidden fruit would have rendered the nature of man mortal, had it not been ſo previous to the eating of it, nevertheleſs it could not produce mortality in a nature, which was mortal before, for this would be the ſame as to ſuppoſe two original cauſes of mortality; which is inadmiſſible, as there cannot be two firſt cauſes to any event whatever.

THAT mortality was the condition of animal life univerſally, has been particularly argued in the 4th Section of the 3d Chapter, treating on phyſical evils, to which the reader is referred.

NOTWITHSTANDING the great buſtle which has been in the world concerning the "*tree of knowledge of good and evil,*" and the woeful conſequences of it's fruit to mankind, it is no ways probable, that ſo baneful a tree was ever permitted by divine providence to have exiſted; which ſhould not only prove to be the death of all mankind, but that of the only begotten ſon of God, and eventually terminate in the damnation of the greateſt part of the human ſpecies.

ACCORDING to this tradition it might well have "*repented the Lord, that he had made man on the earth*;" or at leaſt that he had made ſuch a tree, or that he had permitted the devil to have enſnared the two firſt great babies of mankind, the ſtory of which will not bear a rational examination. For if the fruit is ſuppoſed to have been good for food, gratifying to their appetites, and pleaſing to their eyes, there can be no reaſon aſſigned for the prohibition of the eating thereof.

We will premiſe that the eating of this fruit muſt have been attended in its conſequences with a phyſical on moral evil, or no evil at all, inaſmuch as there is no third ſort of evil in the univerſe; and as there could not have been an original intrinſic evil of either a phyſical or moral nature, in the uſe and enjoyment of that food, which Moſes repreſented to be "*good*," and "*pleaſant*," it would have been unworthy of God to have prohibited the enjoyment of it.

That God ſhould foreclose any of his creatures from doing or enjoying, that which is in itſelf fit and rational, by a poſitive command, would be the ſame as to ſuppoſe that the injunction was unreaſonable, and therefore ſuch a poſitive prohibition is groundleſs. For the innocent couple could not, with any propriety, have been laid under any manner of reſtriction from God, reſpecting the gratification of their natural and conſequently innocent appetites; or the refreſhing and ſtrengthening their nature in the uſe and nutriment of any or every of the good and deſirable fruit of the garden. Had they eaten to exceſs, there might have been a blamable accuſation againſt them, but in this caſe the puniſhment of a vomit would probably have atoned for the offence; as their knowledge of the proportion of food muſt have been learned from experience.

In this view of the caſe, original ſin (ſo called) does not appear with that turpitude and hell-deſerving vindictive puniſhment, which it is commonly from the pulpit repreſented to deſerve. Be this as it will, provided that there was not, in the eternal reaſon and fitneſs of things, any impropriety, or evil, either of a phyſical or moral nature, in the uſe and nutrition of the fruit of the "*Tree of knowledge of good and evil*," no after premiſed prohibition from God could make the uſe and nutrition of it to be ſo.

For the eternal reaſon and fitneſs of things is immutably the ſame, and cannot be changed, nor could there ever ariſe in the divine mind a reaſon, why they ſhould change; inaſmuch as omniſcience itſelf had eternally comprehended all the poſſible relations, agreements and fitneſs of things, both moral and natural; ſo that in the order of time there could never be an addition to, dimunition of, or deviation from eternal rectitude, which muſt have eternally had the divine ſanction and ſupport. From hence we infer, that God could never have given any poſitive laws to the firſt progenitors of mankind, or to any of his creatures, laying them under any other injunction or prohibition, but ſuch as reſult from the reaſon and fitneſs of things; which precludes the prohibition of Moſes before alluded to, leaving Adam and Eve and all other creatures on the footing of the law of nature.

SECTION II.

Pointing out the natural impoſſibility of all and every of the diverſe Species of Biped Animals, commonly termed Man, to have lineally deſcended from Adam and Eve, or from the ſame original Progenitors, with Remarks on the uncertainty, whether the WHITE, BLACK *or* TAWNY *Nations are hereditary to* ORIGINAL SIN, *or who of them it is that needs the* ATONEMENT*: With Remarks on the Devil's beguileing Adam and Eve.*

IT is altogether improbable and manifeſtly contradictory to ſuppoſe, that the various and diverſe nations and tribes of the earth, who walk upon two legs, and are included under the term *man*, have or poſſibly could have deſcended by ordinary generation, from the ſame parents, be they ſuppoſed to be who they will.

Those adventurers, who have ſailed or travelled to the ſeveral parts of the globe, inform us, in their reſpective hiſtories, that they find the habitable part of it more or leſs populated by one kind or other of rational animals, and that conſidered as tribes or nations, there is evidently a gradation of intellectual capacity among them, ſome more exalted and others lower in the ſcale of being; and that they are ſpecifically diverſe from each other with reſpect to their ſeveral animal natures, though in moſt reſpects they appear to have one ſort of nature with us, viz. more like us than like the brute creation; as they walk erect, ſpeak with man's voice, and make uſe of language of one ſort or other, though many of them are more or leſs inarticulate in their manner of ſpeaking: and in many other particulars bear a general likeneſs to us. They are nevertheleſs conſidered as diſtinct tribes or nations, are of different ſizes, and as to complexion, they vary from the two extremes of white and black, in a variety of tawny mediums.

The learned nations can trace their genealogies, (though ſomewhat incorrect) for a conſiderable time, but are certain to be ſooner or later loſt in the retroſpect thereon, and thoſe that are of an inferior kind, or deſtitute of learning or ſcience have no other knowledge of their genealogies, than they retain by their reſpective traditions, which are very inconſiderable. They are likewiſe diverſe from each other in their features and in the ſhape of their bodies and limbs, and ſome are diſtinguiſhed from others by their rank ſmell and the difference in their hair, eyes and viſage, but to point out the diſtinctions minutely would exceed my deſign.

The Ethiopeans though of a ſhining black complexion, have regular and beautiful features, and long black hair (one of thoſe female beauties captivated the affections of Moſes) they differ very materially from the negro blacks, ſo that it appears impoſſible that they ſhould have deſcended in a lineal ſucceſſion from the ſame anceſtors. They are uniformly in their reſpective generations eſſentially diverſe from each other, ſo that an iſſue from a male and female of the two nations would be a mongrel, partaking partly of the kind of both nations. So alſo concerning the difference which ſubſiſts between us and the negroes; their black ſkin is but one of the particulars in which they are different from us; their many and very eſſential differences fully evince, that the white nations and they could not according to the law of their reſpective generations, have had one and the ſame lineal original, but that they have had their diverſe kind of original progenitors.

It is true that the ſeveral nations and tribes of the earth, comprehended under the general term man, notwithſtanding their diverſity to each other in bodily ſhape and mental powers, bear a nearer reſemblance to one another than the brute kind, for which reaſon they are known by one common appellation: though it is manifeſt that they could never have lineally deſcended from the ſame firſt parents, whether their names were Adam and Eve or what not.

But inaſmuch as our genealogies are wholly inſufficient for the purpoſe of explaining our reſpective originals or any or either of them, or to give us or any of us, conſidered as individuals or nations, who fall under the denomination of the term man, any manner of inſight or knowledge from whom we are lineally deſcended, or who were our reſpective original anceſtors, or what their names were: We muſt therefore reaſon on this ſubject from the facts and cauſes now exiſting, which abundantly evince, that we are of different kinds, and conſequently are not of the ſame lineage.

But how many ſpecifically diſtinct original progenitors there have been, from whom the progenies of rational animals have lineally deſcended, is to us unknown, Moſes has given us a hiſtory of one Adam and his helpmate Eve, whom he affirms to have been the firſt parents of mankind; but whether they were of a white, black or tawny complexion he does not inform us; ſo that it remains precarious and undetermined, admitting his chronicle to be true, whether we who are of the white nations or thoſe of the black or tawney were their deſcendants, for that the whole could not (as will be further argued.) And conſequently it remains alſo uncertain whether our mortality took place in conſequence of the eating the forbidding fruit. For admitting that to have been the cauſe of mortality to Adam and his poſterity, yet it would have been reſtricted to his lineal deſcendants, and therefore could not have been the cauſe of mortality to thoſe diverſe and ſpecifically diſtinct nations or tribes of the earth, which have had their lineage from other original progenitors, any more than to the beaſts of the field.

As it remains uncertain and altogether precarious whether we are the poſterity of Adam or not (admitting that there was ſuch a man, and that he apoſtatized and brought mortality on himſelf and upon his deſcendents) it is equally uncertain whether it is the white, black, or tawny nations, who are guilty of original ſin, ſo called, on the poſition that Adam was the fœderal head and repreſentative of his poſterity, and capable of ſinning for them. And laſtly, the ſame uncertainty ſtill remains, admitting the foregoing poſitions, whether it is the white, black, or tawny nations, who need an atonement for their apoſtacy, or whether it may not be the Etheopians, negroes or ſome other diſtinct lineage of people called mankind. In all theſe matters we are in the dark, (admitting the reality of the apoſtacy) and unable to apply the apoſtacy with its conſequences, or the redemption with its conſequences either to ourſelves or to others: inaſmuch as all nations and tribes of people, called man, could not poſſibly have been the offspring of Adam; and conſequently ſuſpence and uncertainty in theſe matters muſt unavoidably perplex and confound the believer in the chriſtian ſcheme, unleſs they are reſolved to believe, that the white nations and that of the negroes, Etheopians, Hottentots, and all other nations and tribes of the earth, who walk on two legs, ſprang from the lineage of a ſuppoſed father Adam: though at the ſame time common ſenſe ſtares every one in the face, and teſtifies to the contrary.

The acquaintance, which we have had with the negroe nation in particular, fully evinces the abſurdity of ſuppoſing them to be of the ſame blood and kindred with ourſelves. But that there are ſome original intrinſic and hereditary diverſity or eſſential difference between us and them, which cannot be aſcribed to time, climate, or to mere contingence.

For that we and they are in nature inherently and uniformly diverſe from each other in our reſpective conſtitutions and generations, and have been ſo time immemorial. So that the negroes are of a different ſpecies of rational beings from us, and conſequently muſt have had their diſtinct lineal original; was it not ſo, there could be no ſuch thing as a mongrel or mulatto, who is occaſioned by a copulation between the males and the females of the reſpective diverſe ſpecies, the iſſue partaking of both natures:

Had all the nations and tribes of the world, who are denominated rational, been lineally deſcended from the ſame progenitors, mongreliſm could never have taken place among them, as in this caſe they would have been all of the ſame kind: from hence we infer, that they have had their reſpective original progenitors. The Dutch colony at the Cape of Good Hope, have enacted laws to puniſh with death ſuch of their Dutch ſubjects as may be convicted of copulating with the

Hottentots; for that their nature is adjudged to be of an inferior ſpecies to theirs, ſo that mixing their nature with them would eſſentially degenerate and debaſe their own.

ALTHOUGH it is manifeſtly abſurd to trace the geneology of every of the ſpecies of two legged intelligent animals from one and the ſame progenitors. Admitting every of them to have lineally deſcended from a premiſed father Adam; yet the ſcripture ſtory of the apoſtacy is in itſelf incredidle.

To ſuppoſe that the craft of Hell, by the interpoſition of its infernals, ſhould have been permitted by divine providence to have been exerted againſt a premiſed new made couple, is inadmiſſible. It appears from Moſes, that they were deſtitute of learning or inſtruction, having been formed at full ſize, in the ſpace of one day, and conſequently void of experience; from hence we may with propriety infer, that they would have been but poorly able to cope with the wiles of the Devil, who in this progreſſive age of the world is allowed to be more than a match for any one man (eſpecially if in connection with a woman.) One man bears no more proportion to him than Jonas did to the whale, which ſwallowed him.

The Clergy have been combined againſt the devil for more than ſeventeen hundred years laſt paſt, and it is their conſtant cry that he has been all this time gaining ground of them, ſeducing more ſouls to hell, than they have ſavingly converted to Heaven; ſo as that we are told, the former is much more popular than the latter.

This infernal monſter, who has ſo diſturbed our world, is ſaid to have made war in heaven, he is called by the name of the dragon, and is deſcribed to be of a red colour, whoſe tail drew a third part of the ſtars of heaven, and caſt them to the ground; "*And there was war in Heaven, Michael and his Angels fought againſt the Dragon, and the Dragon fought and his Angels.*"

When we conſider, what a diabolical, powerful, malicious, ſpiteful, deſigning, cunning and enſnaring raſcal the Devil, Satan, the Dragon or the old Serpent is repreſented to be, we cannot reconcile it to divine providence to have permitted ſo pernicious and artful a being to have transformed himſelf into the likeneſs of a ſerpent, thereby capacitating himſelf to work his premeditated villainy with a woman who juſt before had been taken out of Adam's broad-ſide, whoſe experience had been none or trifling, and by deluding her pave the way to enſnare Adam alſo, together with their numerous offspring. This is too much craft to have been permitted to be exerciſed towards ſuch an innocent ignorant and new made twain, as there is no proportion between the knowledge, malice and ſkill of the tempter on the one part, and the innocency and imbecillity of the vanquiſhed on the other. From whence we infer, that divine goodneſs never permitted thoſe tranſactions of Satan. But admitting the facts, Adam and Eve had an undoubted right to plead non-age, and lay the blame on the devil, who, according to Moſes, was the efficient cauſe of the apoſtacy.

SECTION III.

OF *the* ORIGIN *of the* DEVIL *or of* MORAL EVIL, *and of the* DEVIL'*s talking with* EVE; *with a Remark that the Doctrine of* APOSTACY *is the* FOUNDATION OF CHRISTIANITY.

INASMUCH as the devil is repreſented to have had ſo great and undue an influence in bringing about the apoſtacy of Adam, and ſtill to continue his temptations to mankind, it may be worth our while to examine into the nature and manner of his being and the mode of his exhibiting his temptations.

And firſt we will premiſe, that the devil is neither ſelf-exiſtent, eternal, nor infinite; and

Secondly, that God never made him a devil; and now there remains but one poſſible way more to account for his exiſtence as a devil, which is, to ſuppoſe him to have been made a good and probationary finite being, and that by a miſimprovement of his talents, or by making a bad or immoral uſe of his liberty, which is the ſame as departing from moral rectitude, he acquired the oppoſite habit of ſin and wickedneſs; which conſtitutes a vicious or wicked being, whom we may as well call by the name of devil, ſatan, or the old ſerpent, as by any other name; and thus accounting for a devil (which is the ſame as giving a diffinition of the origin of moral evil) does at the ſame time preſcribe a way whereby any and every of mankind, or any other finite mental beings, may become vicious or ſinful, the ſame as the devil has been previouſly ſuppoſed to do, in order to have made himſelf a devil, and that altogether independent of any ſuppoſed devil or of any of his temptations. For if this ſuppoſed creature whom we call the devil, was originally a ſalvable probationary being, and by a bad uſe of liberty became a ſinner, why may not any other probationary creatures, by a bad uſe of their liberty, become ſinners alſo, and that as free from any influence or ſeducement of any ſuppoſed devil, as the premiſed devil himſelf may be ſuppoſed to have been from the influence or ſeduction of any previous devil or tempter.

On theſe principles the ſcheme of ſome firſt tempter or devil is chimerical and without foundation, and we may as well account for our own temptations or ſins as for his; for the queſtion, run it up to the origin of moral evil, terminates the ſame in a ſuppoſed devil as in man or any other agent of trial whatever. For all poſſible moral evil that ever did or can take place in the infinitude of the creation of God, is neither more nor leſs than the deviation of moral agents from moral rectitude; and ſuch deviations take place in conſequence of a wrong and vicious uſe of liberty: This is the only poſſible origin of moral evil, and is equally poſſible to all probationary agents, as there always was, and ever will be the ſame liability to tranſgreſſion or ſin in all finite probationiſts, as to any premiſed devil. And to this the Apoſtle James agrees: "*But every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own luſt and enticed.*"

Undoubtedly there has been a greater variety in the order of intelligent beings, in God's immenſe creation, than we are able to enumerate, who may every of them more or leſs have tranſgreſſed the rules of eternal unerring order and reaſon, which is the ſame as moral fitneſs; and who may have been or will be reſtored to a participation of morality, and conſequently to a rational happineſs again, as has been argued in Chapter 3, treating on the ſubject of infinite and eternal puniſhment; which is needleſs to be here repeated, for it is eaſier to the reader, if he ſhould be ſo minded to ſatisfy himſelf on this ſubject, to turn to that Chapter and read it, than it is for me to write it over again.

But if it be admitted, that the creature called the Devil (who muſt be ſuppoſed to be under the divine government,as much as any other creature) could become inflexible, and perpetually rebellious and wicked; incapable of a reſtoration, and conſequently ſubjected to eternal puniſhment (which to me appears to be inconſiſtent with the wiſdom and goodneſs of the divine government, and the nature, end and deſign of a probationary agent) yet it would by no means follow from hence, that ſo ſtubbornly wicked and incorrigible a creature, would have been permitted, by the providence of God, to tempt, enſnare or ſeduce mankind, by plying his temptations to their weak ſide: One thing we are certain of, *viz.* that the Devil does not viſit our world in a bodily or organized ſhape, and there is not in nature a ſecond way, in which it is poſſible for him to make known himſelf to us, or that he could have done it to our progenitors, nor could he ever have communicated to them or to us, any temptations or ideas whatever, any otherwiſe than by making a proper application to our external ſenſes, ſo that we could underſtand him, or receive the ideas of his temptations in a natural way. For ſupernatural intercourſe with the world of ſpirits or inviſible beings has been ſhown to be contradictory and impoſſible in the arguments contained in the ſixth Chapter, to which the reader is referred. Thoſe arguments will hold equally good as applied to either good or evil ſpirits, and are demonſtrative of the utter impoſſibility of mankind's holding any manner of intercourſe or intelligence with them.

BUT ſhould we premiſe, that, according to the hiſtory of Moſes, it was in the power of the Devil to aſſume a bodily ſhape, and that he did in very deed transform himſelf into the figure, likeneſs and organization of a ſnake, yet by and with that organ he could not have ſpoken or uttered the following articulate words, which Moſes charged him with; *to wit*, "*And the ſerpent ſaid unto the woman, ye ſhall not ſurely die, for God doth know, that in the day ye eat thereof, that your eyes ſhall be opened, and ye ſhall be as gods knowing good and evil.*"

As the ſerpent is by nature incapable of ſpeech, it muſt have put the Devil into the ſame predicament, admitting that he transformed himſelf into the ſame figure or likeneſs, and conſequently for want of the proper and adequate organs of ſpeech, he muſt neceſſarily have been incapable of any other language than that of rattling his tail, and therefore could never have ſpoken thoſe recited words unto Eve, or communicated any of his temptations unto her by language, while in that ſimilitude. However, admitting that the firſt parents of mankind were beguiled by the wiles of the Devil to tranſgreſs the divine law, yet of all tranſgreſſions it would have been the moſt trivial (conſidered under all the particular circumſtances of it) that the mind of man can conceive of.

Who in the exerciſe of reaſon can believe, that Adam and Eve by eating of ſuch a ſpontaneous fruit could have incurred the eternal diſpleaſure of God, as individuals? Or that the divine vindictive juſtice ſhould extend to their un-offending offspring then unborn? And ſentence the human progeny to the lateſt poſterity to everlaſting deſtruction? As chimerical as Moſes's repreſentation of the apoſtacy of man manifeſtly appears to be, yet it is the very baſis, on which chriſtianity is founded, and is anounced in the New-Teſtament to be the very cauſe why Jeſus Chriſt came into this world, "*that he might deſtroy the works of the Devil,*" and redeem fallen man, *alias*, the elect, from the condemnation of the apoſtacy; which leads me to the conſideration of the doctrine of imputation.

Chapter

Chapter XII.

OF IMPUTATION.

SECTION I.

IMPUTATION *cannot change, alienate or transfer the perſonal Demerit of Sin, and perſonal Merit of Virtue to others, who were not active therein, although this Doctrine ſuppoſes an alienation thereof.*

THE doctrine of imputation according to the chriſtian ſcheme, conſiſts of two parts; firſt, of imputation of the apoſtacy of Adam and Eve to their poſterity, commonly called original ſin; and ſecondly, of the imputation of the merits or righteouſneſs of Christ, who in ſcripture is called the ſecond Adam, to mankind, or to the elect. This is a conciſe definition of the doctrine, and which will undoubtedly be admitted to be a juſt one by every denomination of men, who are acquainted with chriſtianity whether they adhere to it or not. I therefore proceed to illuſtrate and explain the doctrine by tranſcribing a ſhort, but very pertinent converſation, which in the early years of my Manhood I had with a Calviniſtical divine; but previouſly remark, that I was educated in what is commonly called the Armenian principles, and among other tenets to reject the doctrine of original ſin, this was the point at iſſue between the clergyman and me. In my turn I oppoſed the docrine of original ſin with philoſophical reaſonings, and as I thought had confuted the doctrine. The Reverend gentleman heard me through patiently, and with candor replied, " your metaphyſical reaſonings are not to the purpoſe; inaſmuch as you are a chriſtian, and hope and expect to be ſaved by the imputed righteouſneſs of Chriſt to you; for you may as well be imputedly ſinful as imputedly righteous. Nay ſaid he, if you hold to the doctrine of ſatisfaction and atonement by Chriſt, by ſo doing you pre-ſuppoſe the doctrine of apoſtacy or original ſin to be in fact true; for ſaid he, if mankind were not in a ruined and condemned ſtate by nature, there could have been no need of a redeemer, but each individual of them would have been accountable to his creator and judge upon the baſis of his own moral agency. Further obſerving, that upon philoſophical principles it was difficult to account for the doctrine of original ſin, or of original righteouſneſs, yet as they were plain fundamental doctrines of the chriſtian faith, we ought to aſſent to the truth of them, and that from the divine authority of revelation. Notwithſtanding, ſaid he, if you will give me a philoſophical explanation of original imputed righteouſneſs, which you profeſs to believe, and expect ſalvation by, then I will return you a philoſophical explanation of the doctrine of original ſin; for it is plain, ſaid he, that your objections lie with equal weight againſt original imputed righteouſneſs, as againſt original imputed ſin." Upon which I had the candor to acknowledge to the worthy eccleſiaſtic, that upon the chriſtian plan, I perceived that the argument had fairly terminated againſt me. For at that time I dared not diſtruſt the infallibility of revelation, much more to diſpute it. However, this converſation was uppermoſt in my mind for ſeveral months after, and after many painful ſearches and reſearches after the truth reſpecting the doctrine of imputation, reſolved at all events to abide the diciſion of rational argument in the premiſes, and on a full examination of both parts of the doctrine, rejected the whole; for on a fair ſcrutiny I found, that I muſt concede to it entirely or not at all, or elſe believe inconſiſtently as the clergyman had argued.

Having opened and explained the doctrine we proceed argumentatively to conſider it. Imputation of ſin or righteouſneſs includes an alteration or tranferring of the perſonal merits or demerits of ſin or righteouſneſs, from thoſe who may be ſuppoſed to have been active in the one or the other, to others, who are premiſed not to have been active therein, otherwiſe it would not anſwer the Bible notion of imputation. For if ſin or righteouſneſs, vice or virtue, are imputable only to their reſpective perſonal proficients or actors, in this caſe original ſin muſt have been imputed to Adam and Eve, to the excluſion of their poſterity, and the righteouſneſs of Chriſt as excluſively imputed to himſelf, precluding all others therefrom; ſo that both the ſin of the firſt Adam and the righteouſneſs of the ſecond, would, on this ſtating of imputation, have been matters which reſpect merely the agency, or the demerits or merits of the two reſpective Adams themſelves, and in which we could have had no blame, reward or concern, any more than in the building of Babel.

THIS then is the queſtion that determines the ſequel of the diſpute for or againſt the doctrine of imputation ; *viz.* Whether the perſonal merit or demerit of mankind, that is to ſay their virtue or vice, righteouſneſs or wickedneſs can be alienated, imputed to, or transferred from one perſon to another, or not ? If any ſhould object againſt this ſtating of the queſtion now in diſpute, it would be the ſame in reality as diſputing againſt the doctrine of imputation itſelf, for imputation muſt transfer or change the perſonal merit or demerit of the ſin or righteouſneſs of mankind or not do it ; if it does not do it, the whole notion of original ſin or of righteouſneſs, as being imputed from the firſt and ſecond Adams to mankind, is without foundation, conſequently, if there is any reality in the doctrine of imputation, it muſt needs transfer or change the guilt of original ſin, or of the apoſtacy of Adam and Eve, to their poſterity, or otherwiſe they could need no atonement or imputative righteouſneſs, as a remedy therefrom, but every individual of "mankind would have ſtood accountable to their creator and judge on the baſis of their own moral agency," which is undoubtedly the true ſtate of the caſe, reſpecting all rational and accountable beings ; ſo that if the transferring of the individual merits or demerits of one perſon to another, is not contained in the act or doctrine of imputation

putation, it contains nothing at all, but is a ſound without a meaning, and after all the talk which has been in the world about it, we muſt finally adopt the old proverb, *viz.* every tub ſtands upon its own bottom.

SECTION II.

The Puniſhment of Sin, or the Reward of Virtue, as it reſpects the Mind, can have no poſitive Exiſtence, abſtractly conſidered from the Demerits of the one or Merit of the other; with an Explanation of the Scripture Doctrine of IMPUTATION.

THOSE who believe in the doctrine of imputation, will conſequently undoubtedly ſuppoſe, that the ſinful act of the apoſtacy of Adam was imputed to his poſterity, as ſoon as the order of generation permitted them a poſitive exiſtence; for 'till that time they could not have been denominated either guilty or innocent, any more than mere nonentity. So that if we admit the ſuffering and atonement of Chriſt and the imputed ſin of Adam, to his lineal deſcendants, thoſe generations which have been born ſince Chriſt's crucifixion, cannot be made partakers of the atonement; for it is ſince that we have been made imputedly ſinners, if at all, and therefore could not be included in the atonement which was more than ſeventeen hundred years ago.

We will however conſider this doctrine, as it reſpected the generations of mankind, previous to the ſufferings of Chriſt. If Jeſus Chriſt ſuffered for the imputed ſin of Adam to the generations of mankind, previous to the era of the atonement, it follows of conſequence, that the demerit of original ſin was changed and transferred from thoſe reſpective generations of Adam (or from the elect) and imputed to be the ſin of Chriſt, and for which he ſuffered; ſo that the imputation of ſin conſiſts of imputation and re-imputation; *viz.* the imputation of Adam's ſin to his poſterity, and the re-imputation of it to the perſon of Jeſus Chriſt.

Those who ſubſcribe to this doctrine believe, that God "*laid on him the iniquity of us all,*" at leaſt of the elect; and that "*by his ſtripes they were healed*;" and that "*Chriſt was bruiſed for their iniquities, and wounded for their tranſgreſſions.*" They will ſuppoſe that the ſuffering of Chriſt in the garden, upon the croſs, and in his death, in the agonies of which he is ſaid to have borne the vindictive wrath of God, was for original re-imputed ſin.

None who adhere to Chriſtianity will ſuppoſe that Chriſt ſuffered merely on his own account, or that he was any otherwiſe a ſinner than imputedly ſo. Therefore all the ſufferings of Chriſt muſt be admitted to have been wholly to redeem more or leſs of mankind from the ſuppoſed ruin and condemnation of the apoſtacy. This I take to be the Scripture notion reſpecting the imputation and re-imputation of ſin.

But it may be objected, that it was merely the puniſhment of original ſin which was re-imputed to Chriſt, and not the guilt or criminality of it; but this would be only puniſhing the innocent in the perſon of Chriſt, and the guilty would be guilty ſtill, and ſtill ought to be puniſhed for the ſin for which Chriſt is ſuppoſed to have once ſuffered the penalty: ſo that there would, on this poſition, be a double puniſhment inflicted for the ſin of the apoſtacy, the one on Chriſt, and the other on thoſe he is ſaid to have redeemed and conſequently, the ſuffering of Chriſt would be of no avail; for the original cauſe of puniſhment muſt have conſiſted in the criminal nature, guilt or demerit of ſin, and there would forever remain the ſame reaſon why mankind or any of them ſhould be puniſhed for it, as long as they remain ſinners, as there was previous to the premiſed ſuffering of Chriſt for it;

and thus, by ſuppoſing the imputation of puniſhment, abſtractedly from the ſin, and guilt, which demerited it, could be of no avail to mankind, or to any of them, but would leave them in the ſame condition in which ſuch an atonement found them: ſo on the other hand a ſuppoſed imputation of the conſolation and mental happineſs of Chriſt's righteouſneſs, without imputing the real merit or principle of it, would be contradictory and impoſſible; for the want of the real merit or principle of virtue or righteouſneſs, is the cauſe of miſery or puniſhment, in a moral ſenſe; ſo that the identical merit or principle of the righteouſneſs of Chriſt muſt needs have been imputed to believers, otherwiſe they could not receive any conſolation or intellectual happineſs therefrom: for that a principle of virtue or righteouſneſs is pre-requiſitely neceſſary to a moral happineſs.

To ſuppoſe the exiſtence of ſuch an happineſs, without its pre-requiſite, would be the ſame, as to ſuppoſe an effect without a cauſe, which is too abſurd to pretend to. From this we infer, that the identical act or demerit of original ſin, or the ſin of Adam, according to the chriſtian plan, muſt have been transferred, made over, or imputed to his poſterity, and from them, or the elect, reimputed to be the identical act and demerit of Jeſus

Chriſt,

Chriſt, and that he ſuffered and atoned for it, and laſtly, that the merit or identical act of the righteouſneſs of Chriſt, ſhould be made over, tranſferred or imputed to mankind, or to the elect, in order to redeem them from the condemnation of the apoſtacy, commonly called original Sin, to the end that they ſhould be reſtored to the favor and Salvation of God.

SECTION III.

The IMPUTATION *of* MORAL GOOD *or* EVIL *is incompatible with our own conſciouſneſs of the one or of the other of thoſe agencies, and therefore cannot effect our mental Happineſs or Miſery.*

THAT moral good or evil, with their reſpective concomitant mental happineſs or miſeries, are the perſonal and inherent merit or demerit of the reſpective individual agents, who make proficiency in either the one or the other of thoſe oppoſite agencies, is one of the ſelf evident axioms, which can be made but little if any plainer, or more evident by argumentation than by the mere ſtating therof, and if true over turns the doctrine of imputation.

It is repugnant to the firſt perceptions of common-ſenſe to ſuppoſe, that the body of A and the body of B which are the bodies of two individuals, are nevertheleſs one and the ſame body: or that the mind, which actuates the body of A, is the ſame, which is united to and actuates the body of B; common ſenſe will further agree that A and B have a diſtinct excluſive perſonality in their reſpective bodies and minds, and that the one is not the other,and conſequently that the doings, actions, or agency of the mind and body of A, are not the identical doings, actions or agency of the mind and body of B: from hence we infer, that A's virtuous or vicious agency, or his proficiencies in either virtue or vice, is his own perſonal merit or demerit to the excluſion of all others. And further that A, and A only, in truth, juſtice and equity, ſhould be either commended or diſcommended, rewarded or puniſhed, according as his agency may be ſuppoſed to be either virtuous or vicious, or to deſerve praiſe or blame, happineſs or miſery; and that the ſame is true of every individual of mankind.

The argument applies as juſtly to the agency of a premiſed Adam and Eve, as to their ſuppoſed poſterity, ſo that, there could be no more propriety, juſtice or poſſibility of imputing the act, doing or agency of original ſin, or the penal conſequences of it to the then unborn offspring of Adam, than there would be in imputing the agency of the man in the moon to them. The ſame impropriety, injuſtice and impoſſibility would attend the ſuppoſed imputation of original righteouſneſs, commonly called the righteouſneſs of Chriſt, to any or all of mankind; for if that righteouſneſs is Chriſt's, it is a downright contradiction to ſuppoſe that it is the righteouſneſs of mankind or of the elect; the ſame as to ſuppoſe that the righteouſneſs of A is the righteouſneſs of B, which has juſt before been evinced to be impoſſible. But why ſhould A be commended or diſcommended, puniſhed or rewarded for his virtuous or vicious agency, any more than B, or any other perſon whatever? becauſe A's conduct whether it be virtuous or vicious, good or evil, is, in the truth, juſtice and equity of things, his own individual and inherent property; for that A's principle, diſpoſition, quality and temper of mind, be they what they will, is in truth his identical merit or demerit, excluſively, which we may properly call his property. For mankind, conſidered as individuals, may as well be ſaid to have a property in their perſonal actions or habits, virtues or vices, as in lands and chattels, though the latter may be alienated or transferred, but the former not, becauſe that A and he only is conſcious of the ſtate and condition of his own mind, his good or bad diſpoſitions, habits and intentions, joy or grief, happineſs or miſery of body or mind. The ſame may be ſaid of every individual of mankind, that we are not and cannot be conſcious of each others conſciouſneſs, and conſequently cannot be intelligently happy or miſerable for what another does, ſuffers or enjoys. Thoſe, who are co-temporaries, may be remotely happy or miſerable by way of ſympathy, or in conſequence of the management of the public intereſts of the community or ſociety, to which they belong; but not by way of merit or deſert. We cannot be miſerable for the ſin of Adam, or happy in the righteouſneſs of Chriſt, in which tranſactions we were no ways acceſſory or aſſiſting as accomplices, or otherwiſe concerned; and are not at all conſcious of thoſe antient matters; all we know about it is from the hiſtory of Moſes, the Evangeliſt's and Apoſtles: nor is it poſſible for us to feel ourſelves guilty of any remorſe of conſcience, concerning a premiſed eating a pleaſant apple, which may have been the ſpontaneous production of nature in paradiſe. Nor on the other hand are we at all conſcious of any merit or virtue, in conſequence of any ſuppoſed ſuffering or mediation for the premiſed crime of eating that apple.

What have thoſe old and obſelete matters to do with our virtues or vices, or with our conſciouſneſs of righteouſneſs or wickedneſs, happineſs or miſery, reward or blame? For it is manifeſtly abſurd to ſuppoſe, that moral good or evil can poſſibly be imputed from one perſon to another, except it was in nature poſſible that one perſon could be conſcious of another's conſciouſneſs.

But inaſmuch as the laws of nature, which are the laws of God, forbid it, we may therefore infer the impoſſibility of the reality of the ſcripture doctrine of imputation. We will premiſe, that a great and tremendous ſin was imputed to me, or to the reader, or to us both, aud at the ſame time we had no conſciouſneſs or knowledge of it, or of its puniſhment; would any one ſuppoſe, that we ſhould not be as compoſedly and mentally happy, as though it had not been imputed to us? In my opinion it would be a matter of perfect indifference to us, whether ſin or righteouſneſs, goodneſs or badneſs was imputed to us, or what degrees of either of them, if ſo be we had no ſenſation, perception or conſciouſneſs of it.

To ſuppoſe it in nature poſſible, that moral good and evil with the rewards and puniſhments naturally concommitant with them, reſpectively, could be imputed or transferred from one individual to another,is ſo great an abſurdity,that it wants a name; for it is ſaying neither more or leſs, than that there is no intrinſic or eſſential diſtinction between the perſonal merit or demerit of mankind; ſo that admitting the doctrine of imputation; the wicked might as likely ſhare the joys and ſalvation of the righteous, as the righteous themſelves; and the righteous be ſubjected to the miſerable condition of the wicked, which is altogether prepoſterous. If the advocates for imputation ſhould object, that it would be incompatible with the juſtice of God, thus univerſally to impute the ſin of the wicked to the righteous, or the righteouſneſs of the righteous to the wicked, with the rewards and puniſhments,naturally and reſpectively connected with them, it would be the ſame as objecting againſt the whole ſcripture doctrine of imputation. For if it is poſſible, that imputation ſhould take place in one inſtance, why not in another, and ſo on until it becomes univerſal; ſo that the advocates for imputation muſt admit the poſſibility of its taking place univerſally, or not all, leſt, by advancing reaſon and argument, they overturn the fundamental doctrine of chriſtianity; for the reaſon, juſtice and fitneſs of things, is the ſame, whether applied to one inſtance of imputation or more, or to a univerſal prepoſterous application thereof, which is too glaringly abſurd to demand a ſerious argument for its confutation, was it not, that great numbers of mankind, learned as well as unlearned, have embraced it as the ground of their religion and faith.

SECTION IV.

The MORAL RECTITUDE *of Things forecloſes the Act of* IMPUTATION.

IMPUTATION confounds virtue and vice, and ſaps the very foundation of moral government, both divine and human. Abſtract the idea of perſonal merit and demerit, from the individuals of mankind, juſtice would be totally blind, and truth would be nullified; or at leaſt excluded from any ſhare in the adminiſtration of government. Admitting that moral good and evil has taken place in the ſyſtem of rational agents, yet, on the poſition of imputation, it would be impoſſible, that a retribution of juſtice ſhould be made to them by God or by man, except it be according to their reſpective perſonal merits and demerits; which would fix us upon the baſis of our own moral agency and accountability, and preclude the imputation of ghteouſneſs or ſin.

TRUTH reſpects the reality of things, as they are in their various complicated and diſtinct natures, and neceſſarily conforms to all facts and realities. It exiſts in, by and with every thing that does exiſt, and that which does not and cannot exiſt, is fictitious and void of truth, as is the doctrine of imputation. It is a truth that ſome of the individuals of mankind are virtuous, and that others are vicious, and it is a truth, that the former merit peace of conſcience and praiſe, and the latter horror of conſcience and blame: for God has ſo conſtituted the nature of things, that moral goodneſs, naturally and neceſſarily tends to happineſs in a moral ſenſe, and moral evil as neceſſarily tends to the contrary; and as truth reſpects every thing, as being what it is, it reſpects nature, as God has conſtituted it, with its tendencies, diſpoſitions, aptitudes and laws; and as the tendency of virtue is to mental happineſs, and vice the contrary, they fall under the cognizance of truth, as all other facts neceſſarily do; which tendencies will for ever preclude imputation, by making us morally happy or miſerable according to our works.

Truth reſpects the eternal rules of unalterable rectitude and fitneſs, which comprehends all virtue, goodneſs and true happineſs; and as ſin and wickedneſs is no other but a deviation from the rules of eternal unerring order and reaſon, ſo truth reſpects it as an unreaſonable, unfit, unrighteous and unhappy deviation from moral rectitude, naturally tending to miſery. This order of nature, comprehended under the term of truth, muſt have been of all others the wiſeſt and beſt; in fine it muſt have been abſolutely perfect; for this order and harmony of things, could not have reſulted from any thing ſhort of infinite wiſdom, goodneſs and power, by which it is alſo upheld; and all juſt ideas of equity, or of natural or moral fitneſs muſt be learned from nature, and predicated on it; and nature predicated on the immutable perfection of a God; and to ſuppoſe that imputation, in any one inſtance, has taken place, is the ſame as to ſuppoſe, that the eternal order, truth, juſtice, equity and fitneſs of things has been changed, and if ſo, the God of nature muſt needs have been a changeable being, and liable to alter his juſtice or order of nature, which is the ſame thing: for without the alteration of nature, and the tendency of it, there could be no ſuch thing as imputation, but every of the individuals of mankind would be ultimately happy or miſerable, according as their reſpective proficiencies may be ſuppoſed to be either good or evil, agreeable to the order and tendency of nature, before alluded to. For all rational and accountable agents muſt ſtand or fall upon the principles of the laws of nature, except imputation alters the nature and tendency of things; of which the immutability of a God cannot admit.

From what has been already argued on this ſubject, we infer, that as certain as the individuals of mankind, are the proprietors of their own virtues or vices, ſo certain, the doctrine of imputation cannot be true. Furthermore, the ſuppoſed act or agency of imputing or transferring the perſonal merit or demerit of moral good or evil, *alias*, the ſin of the firſt Adam, or the righteouſneſs of the ſecond Adam, to others of mankind, cannot be the act or exertion of either the firſt or ſecond Adam, from whom original ſin and righteouſneſs is ſaid to have been imputed. Nor can it be the act or doing of thoſe individuals, to whom the ſuppoſed merit or demerit of original ſin or righteouſneſs is premiſed to be imputed; ſo that both Adam and each individual of mankind are wholly excluded from acting any part in the premiſed act of imputation; and are ſuppoſed to be altogether paſſive in the matter, and conſequently it neceſſarily follows, that if there ever was ſuch an act as that of imputation, it muſt have been the immediate and ſovereign act of God, to the preclusion of the praiſe or blame of man. But to ſuppoſe, that God can impute the virtue or vice of the perſon of A, to be the virtue or vice of the perſon of B, is the ſame as to ſuppoſe, that God can impute or change truth into falſehood, or falſehood into truth, or that he can reverſe the nature of moral rectitude itſelf, which is inadmiſſible. But admitting, that imputation was in the power and at the option of man, it is altogether probable that they would have been very ſparing in imputing merit and happineſs, but might nevertheleſs have been vaſtly liberal in imputing demerit and miſery, from one to another, which is too farcical.

SECTION V.

A ſtate of Condemnation equally affected the Character of CHRIST, *as far as he may be ſuppoſed to have partaken of the nature of* MAN, *as well as the reſt of* MANKIND; *with Remarks on the Atonement and Satisfaction for* ORIGINAL SIN.

THE doctrine of imputation is in every point of view incompatible with the moral perfections of God. We will premiſe, that the race of Adam in their reſpective generations was guilty of the apoſtacy, and obnoxious to the vindictive juſtice and puniſhment of God, and accordingly doomed to either an eternal or a temporary puniſhment therefor, which is the Bible repreſentation of the matter. What poſſibility could there have been of reverſing the divine decree? It muſt be ſuppoſed to have been juſt, or it could not have had the divine ſanction, and if ſo, a reverſal of it would be unjuſt. But it would be ſtill a greater injuſtice to lay the blame and vindictive puniſhment of a guilty race of condemned ſinners upon an innocent and inoffenſive being, for in this caſe the guilty would be exempted from their juſt puniſhment, and the innocent unjuſtly ſuffer for it, which holds up to view two manifeſt injuſtices; the firſt conſiſts in not doing juſtice to the guilty, and the ſecond in actually puniſhing the innocent, which inſtead of atoning for ſin, would add ſin to ſin, or injuſtice to injuſtice; and after all, if it was ever juſt, that the race of Adam ſhould have been puniſhed for the imputed ſin of their premiſed original Anceſtor, be that puniſhment what it will, it is ſo ſtill, notwithſtanding the atonement, for the eternal juſtice and reaſon of things can never be altered. Thus juſtice always defeats the poſſibility of ſatisfaction for ſin by way of a Mediator.

Provided any advocates for imputation ſhould explain it differently from what I have done, in order to clear it from the inconſiſtencies previouſly pointed out, by premiſing, that as all mankind, including both ſoul and body, deſcended from Adam by natural generation, are therefore to be conſidered but as ſo many individual parts of the ſame Adam, and conſequently became guilty of original ſin, not by imputation of it from Adam to them, but by being actually Adam, are to be conſidered as actually guilty. And as "*Chriſt took not on him the nature of Angels, but the ſeed of Abraham*," or nature of man, and thereby became one of the members of the extenſive nature of Adam, and actually guilty of original ſin, in which nature he ſuffered for it, not by imputation, but in conſequence of his being actually a part of Adam himſelf: Such an expoſition of imputation, explains it all away, and holds up to view no other ſin, but what is actual, or no other puniſhment but what reſulted from it, as juſt. But admiting that Chriſt was of the ſinful nature of Adam, and that he ſuffered for his own actual tranſgreſſion, yet this could not extend the ſatisfaction of his ſuffering for ſin any farther than to himſelf. To ſuppoſe his ſufferings to be applied to any other parts of this great and extenſive Adam, who is premiſed to have lived and died in every generation of mankind to this day, would re-fix us in the doctrine of imputation. For there could be no juſtice in laying all the blame and puniſhment of original ſin, or the ſin of Adam on that part of Adam only, who exiſted in the perſon of Chriſt; when on this poſition of an Adam, many millions of other perſons (thereof) in their reſpective generations and periods of exiſtence muſt be ſuppoſed to be as ſinfully guilty, as the perſon of Chriſt, on this theſis, may be premiſed to be, and conſequently, according to juſtice, muſt ſuffer as he has done, for otherwiſe we come within our former explanation of the ſcripture doctrine of the imputation, of the ſin and righteouſneſs of one to others, which has been previouſly confuted.

THAT phyſical evils may and have been propagated by natural generation, none can diſpute, for that the facts themſelves are obvious. But that moral evil can be thus propagated, is altogether chimerical, for we are not born criminals, nor on the contrary are we born morally good, ſo as to be commended for it. To be innocently or harmleſsly good, is as much as the ſtate of nature can admit of. To be praiſe-worthy, requires that we ſhould be cogitatively, deſignedly and actually virtuous, and that from principle. We are not to be commended or diſcommended, puniſhed or rewarded in a moral ſenſe, merely for being born, or for belonging to this, that or the other race of creatures; and if we partake of the ſame kind of nature, as Adam did, yet he and we are not perſonally or identically the ſame; nor is his agency and ours the ſame, any more than the agency of A, can be the agency of B, as before argued. Simple innocence is a ſufficiency of righteouſneſs for a ſtate of childhood, but from a ſtate of maturity, the law of nature demands a habit of virtue, a deficiency whereof is puniſhed with a want or negation of intelligent happineſs; and poſitive mental evil. But to return to our ſubject; admitting that mankind are ſinners by nature, and in a ſtate of condemnation, it would neceſſarily follow, that Jeſus Chriſt was in the ſame predicament, for the ſcriptures inform us, that "*he took not on him the nature of Angels, but the ſeed of Abraham*," or nature of man: ſo far therefore as he was of the nature of man he muſt have been either innocent or guilty, as the nature of man may be ſuppoſed to be. If the nature of man was innocent, there was no need of a redeemer, but if was naturally guilty and under condemnation of everlaſting damnation, as ſome believe, it would follow, that Chriſt, conſidered as a ſinful creature, and under that condemnation, inſtead of ſuffering three days and three nights in hell for the ſins or condemnation of mankind, or the elect, muſt have ſuffered forever on account of the ſin and condemnation of his nature, as a deſcendent from Adam. And as the divine nature is at an infinite remove from ſin or ſuffering, it was impoſſible, that Chriſt could have ſuffered as a God, therefore his ſuffering, merely as man, for three days and three nights would have been but trifling, had it been equally divided among the proprietors of original ſin, *viz.* among the whole progeny of Adam.

THAT Chriſt as a ſponſor, according to the Chriſtian ſcheme, muſt have ſuffered the ſame quantity or degree of puniſhment, as the poſterity of Adam muſt have done, had it not been for a premiſed redeemer's ſuffering of it, will probably be conceded to by all parties. For if the puniſhment may be ſuppoſed to have been cancelled, as inflicted on the perſon of the ſponſor, why might it not as well have been abated, as it reſpected mankind at large, for whom it is ſuppoſed that Chriſt had become ſponſible? Or if it was poſſible that the puniſhment could have been in the leaſt mitigated, why not the whole remitted without the ceremony of a ſuffering mediator?

IF the ſin of the apoſtacy was imputed from Adam and Eve to their poſterity, they muſt have been acquited from it themſelves, and diſcharged therefrom either in whole or in part, as the original ſin may be ſuppoſed to have been, in whole or in part imputed to their offspring; for it is contradictory to ſuppoſe that ſin could be imputed and not imputed at the ſame time, which muſt have been the caſe provided it was imputed from the firſt parents of mankind to their poſterity, and they were not acquited or diſcharged therefrom in conſequence thereof. Nor could the poſterity of Adam and Eve be required to ſuffer a greater penalty or weight of puniſhment, admitting that original ſin was imputed to them, than Adam and Eve muſt have done, and was able to have ſuſtained, had they borne the penalty of it themſelves, which would have been of no conſiderable conſequence, had it been equally divided and inflicted among their numerous deſcendants; likely it would have been no more than the prick of a pin to each individual.

BUT if the penalty is ſuppoſed to be merely of the mental kind, there could not be any puniſhment at all inflicted on the race of Adam, as we cannot be conſcious of the guilt or blame of original ſin, in the tranſaction whereof we had no manner of agency or concernment.

SECTION

SECTION VI.

The Perſon of JESUS CHRIST, *conſidered in a variety of different Characters, each of which are incompatible with a Participation of the Divine Nature. That a* REDEMPTION, *wrought out by inflicting the Demerits of* SIN *upon the* INNOCENT, *would be* UNJUST, *and that it could contain no* MERCY *or* GOODNESS *to the univerſality of Being, conſidered incluſively.*

IT is impoſſible that God ſhould ſuffer or change, or the perſon of Jeſus Chriſt, as far as he may be ſuppoſed to be of the eſſence of God; for the abſolute perfection of the divine nature exempts it from ſuffering, weakneſs, or any manner of imperfection. Therefore Jeſus Chriſt, in the nature in which he is premiſed to have ſuffered, could not be God.

BUT on the poſition that Chriſt was a mere creature, as the *Arians* believe, though ever ſo exalted, all the obedience or righteouſneſs he could have acquired or attained to, would have been neceſſary for the diſcharge of his own duty as an accountable creature. Admitting that he had imputed it to others, he muſt have been miſerable himſelf for the deficiency thereof, except his righteouſneſs had been acquired by works of ſupererogation, or except he is ſuppoſed to be capable of a moral happineſs without righteouſneſs or goodneſs, and if he may be ſuppoſed to have been capable of ſuch a happineſs without thoſe moral qualifications requiſite thereto, why might not mankind in general have been capable of it upon the ſame footing of deficiency, without his imputed righteouſneſs? However it is no way probable admitting it to be poſſible, that any exalted, wiſe and underſtanding being would part with the eſſentials of his own happineſs; *viz.* his morality to others; and for them, and in their ſtead, actually ſuffer a great and dreadful weight of miſery, and thus at an equal expence of his own happineſs and goodneſs, redeem a race of ſinful and guilty creatures; for there could not on this theſis, be any advantage to the ſyſtem of finite beings, conſidered collectively, or any mercy or goodneſs diſplayed to being in general. What mercy would there be in repriev ing or reſtoring a race of condemned creatures from miſery, by inflicting an equal condemnation or puniſhment on a premiſed innocent and exalted finite being, which ſhould have been inflicted on the guilty? Humanity obliges us to be kind and benevolent, but never obliges us to ſuffer for criminals (nor could ſuch a ſuffering excuſe them from their juſt demerits) but juſtice and ſelf-preſervation forbids it; for all finite beings are under greater obligations to themſelves than to any other creature or race of creatures whatever; ſo that there could be no juſtice or goodneſs in one being's ſuffering for another, nor is it at all compatible with reaſon to ſuppoſe, that God was the contriver of ſuch a propitiation.

The practice of imputing one perſon's crime to another, in capital offences among men, ſo that the innocent ſhould ſuffer for the guilty, has never yet been introduced into any court of judicature in the world, or ſo much as practiſed in any civiliſed country; And the manifeſt reaſon in this, as in all other caſes of imputation, is the ſame, viz. it confounds perſonal merit and de-merit.

The murderer ought to die for the demerit of his crime, but if the court exclude the idea of perſonal demerit (guilt being always the inherent property of the guilty and of them only) they might as well ſentence one perſon to death for the murder as another: for juſtice would be wholly blind was it not predicated on the idea of the fact of a perſonal demerit, on the identical perſon who was guilty of the murder: nor is it poſſible to reward merit abſtractly conſidered from its perſonal agents. Theſe are facts that univerſally hold good in human governments. The ſame reaſons cannot fail to hold good in the divine mind as in that of the human, for the rules of juſtice are eſſentially the ſame whether applied to the one or to the other, having their uniformity in the eternal truth and reaſon of things.

But it is frequently objected, that inaſmuch as one perſon can pay, ſatisfy and diſcharge a caſh debt for another, redeem him from priſon and ſet him at liberty, therefore Jeſus Chriſt might become ſponſible for the ſins of mankind, or of the elect, and by ſuffering their puniſhment atone for them, and free them from their condemnation. But it ſhould be conſidered, that compariſons darken or reflect light upon an argument according as they are either pertinent or impertinent thereto; we will therefore examine the compariſon, and ſee if it will with propriety apply to the atonement.

Upon the Chriſtian ſcheme, Chriſt the ſon was God, and equal with God the father, or with God the Holy Ghoſt, and therefore original ſin muſt be conſidered to be an offence equally againſt each of the perſons of the premiſed Trinity, and being of a criminal nature could not be diſcharged or ſatisfied by caſh or produce, as debts of a civil contract are, but by ſuffering; and it has already been proved to be inconſiſtent with the divine or human government, to inflict the puniſhment of the guilty upon the innocent, though one man may diſcharge another's debt in caſes where lands, chattles or caſh are adequate to it; but what capital offender was ever diſcharged by ſuch commodities?

Still there remains a difficulty on the part of Chriſtianity, in accounting for one of the perſons in the premiſed trinity's ſatisfying a debt due to the impartial juſtice of the unity of the three perſons. For God the ſon to ſuffer the condemnation of guilt in behalf of man, would not only be unjuſt in itſelf, but incompatible with his divinity, and the retribution of the juſtice of the premiſed trinity of perſons in the godhead (of whom God the ſon muſt be admitted to be one) toward mankind; for this would be the ſame as to ſuppoſe God to be judge, criminal and executioner, which is inadmiſſible.

But ſhould we admit for argument's ſake, that God ſuffered for original ſin, yet taking into one complex idea the whole mental ſyſtem of being, univerſally, both finite and infinite, there could have been no diſplay of grace, mercy, or goodneſs to being in general, in ſuch a ſuppoſed redemption of mankind; inaſmuch as the ſame quantity or degree of evil is ſuppoſed to have taken place upon being, univerſally conſidered, as would have taken place, had finite individuals, or the race of Adam, ſuffered according to their reſpective demerits.

Should we admit that there is a trinity of perſons in the divine eſſence, yet the one could not ſuffer without the other, for eſſence cannot be divided in ſuffering, any more than in enjoyment. The eſſence of God is that which includes the divine nature, and the ſame identical nature muſt neceſſarily partake of the ſame glory, honor, power, wiſdom, goodneſs and abſolute uncreated and unlimited perfection, and is equally exempted from weakneſs and ſuffering. Therefore, as certain as Chriſt ſuffered he was not God, but whether he is ſuppoſed to be God or man, or both, he could not in juſtice have ſuffered for original ſin, which muſt have deen the demerit of its perpetrators as before argued.

Supposing Chriſt to have been both God and man, he muſt have exiſted in two diſtinct eſſences, *viz.* the eſſence of God and the eſſence of man. And if he exiſted in two diſtinct and ſeperate eſſences, there could be no union between the divine and human natures. But if there is any ſuch thing as an hypoſtatical union between the divine and human natures, it muſt unite both natures in one eſſence, which is impoſſible: for the divine nature being infinite, could admit of no addition or enlargement, and conſequently cannot allow of a union with any nature whatever. Was ſuch an union poſſible in itſelf, yet, for a ſuperior nature to unite with an inferior one in the ſame eſſence, would be degrading to the former, as it would put both natures on a level by conſtituting an identity of nature: the conſequences whereof would either deify man, or diveſt God of his divinity, and reduce him to the rank and condition of a creature; inaſmuch as the united eſſence muſt be denominated either divine or human.

THAT God ſhould become a man, is impoſſible, and that man ſhould become a God, is equally impoſſible and abſurd. But if the divine nature retains its abſolute perfection, and the nature of man its infirmity, then a premiſed hypoſtatical union between them would imply a union of weakneſs and imperfection to the nature and eſſence of God; for ſo certain as human nature is imperfect and united with the divine, ſo certain perfection muſt be ſuppoſed to unite with imperfection, but it is contradictory and unworthy of the divine nature to form ſuch a hypoſtatical junction. Furthermore to ſuppoſe that two eſſences are contained in one, is as great a contradiction, as to ſuppoſe, that two units are one, and one unit is two: for if two eſſences have a poſitive exiſtence, they muſt exiſt in two diſtinct and ſeperate natures, for that, which conſtitutes but one nature, is and neceſſarily muſt be contained in but one eſſence, ſo *vice verſa*, that which conſtitutes two eſſences, at the ſame time gives exiſtence to two natures, for a nature cannot exiſt without an eſſence, nor an eſſence without a nature; for eſſence is identity itſelf. But that there ſhould be two identities in the ſame nature or eſſence, is impoſſible and contradictory, therefore Jeſus Chriſt could not be both God and man, for this plain reaſon, that if he was one of them, he could not be the other; for God and man are not and cannot be one and the ſame, for that there is an infinite diſproportion between them; for which reaſon they cannot be hypoſtatically united in one nature or eſſence. The divine mind comprehends all poſſible knowledge, with one entire and infinite reflection without a ſucceſſion of thinking. Nor is it compatible with the omnipreſence of God to aſcribe motion to him, for it would imply abſence in him from place, and be a downright contradiction to his being every where preſent; therefore that mind, which intuitively underſtands all things, and is every where preſent, is exalted above our narrow conceptions or traditions of uniting with the animal or cogitative nature of man, any more than with the univerſe in general. Our intelligence would contribute nothing to his mind, and the body of man would be but a circumſcribed and inconſiſtent vehicle to enwrap, or incloſe that mind, which is eternal and infinite. A man is finite and cannot be in but one place at the ſame time, his motion from one place to another as regularly and neceſſarily excludes him from one place, as it introduces him into another; he thinks by ſucceſſion and by parts, and is liable to errors and miſtakes in theory and practice; and ignorance, vanity and infirmity are more or leſs the lot of humanity. How arrogant is it then in man to pretend a union with the divine nature, who is infinitely above our praiſes or adoration? But we are told, that the hypoſtatical union is a myſterious one. Nevertheleſs it is a union or not a union, if it is a union of the divine and human natures, they muſt be comprized in one and the ſelf-ſame eſſence, or otherwiſe it is ſuch a myſterious union, that it is not a union, which is no myſtery at all, but a barefaced abſurdity. For that which we can comprehend to be unreaſonable and contradictory, is by no means myſterious. That only is myſterious, which we cannot underſtand to be reaſonable or unreaſonable, true or falſe, right or wrong, which is not the caſe reſpecting the hypoſtatical union: for admitting it to be true, the human mind muſt reflect, reaſon and judge of things in and with the divine mind. But as the divine mind does not think or reflect by ſucceſſion, and the human mind cannot exert its thinking faculty any otherwiſe than by ſucceſſion, it could not think or reflect in or with the divine mind at all; for the divine omniſcience, comprehending all things, would alſo comprehend the thoughts and reaſonings of the human mind, whether they are ſuppoſed to be right or wrong. But the finite mind would be loſt and ſwallowed up in the divine, without adding any thing to it, except it be imperfection. Nor is it poſſible in itſelf, that an intelligent finite being, who thinks by ſucceſſion, ſhould be united in one eſſence with that mind, which is infinite, and does not think by ſucceſſion; For infinity of intelligence cannot admit of addition, nor could the infinite and finite mind think together in one and the ſame mind, as the manner of their perceptions, as well as the extent of them, would be infinitely different, and conſequently there could be no union between them. But the human mind, by a progreſſive and finite mode of reflection, would act and judge of things, not only diſtinctly from, but oppoſite to the eternal mind, which naturally obſtructs or precludes the union. Beſides, if the human mind acts ſeperately and individually from the divine mind, it acts in the ſame manner as our minds do, and like them would be liable not only to imperfection, but to ſin and miſery; a union too wretched to be aſcribed to the divine nature. But admitting the union between the infinite and finite minds, they would be but one mind, and conſcious of the ſame conſciouſneſs, for otherwiſe they could not be the ſame, or pertain to the ſame eſſence. But that a finite mind could be conſcious of an infinite or all comprehending conſciouſneſs, or compoſe any part of it, is abſurd; as a conſciouſneſs is not compounded of parts, as parts cannot comprize infinity. And as to moral and phyſical evil, the infinite mind is at as great a remove therefrom as from finiteneſs itſelf, and conſequently could not jointly ſuffer with the perſon of a ſuppoſed mediator.

But it may be objected that Jeſus Chriſt was not poſſeſſed of a human mind, and that the hypoſtatical union conſiſted in the uniting of the divinity with the animal part of the nature of man only. But ſuch a union would of conſequence ſubject the divine nature to a ſtate of ſuffering, and obnoxiouſly expoſe it to phyſical evils. To ſuppoſe that it did not, is the ſame as to ſuppoſe, that there was no ſuch union, for if it be really a union, it muſt be attended with the neceſſary conſequences of a union of the divine nature with the animal part of the nature of man, or otherwiſe it is a contradiction to call it a union. But if the divine nature did not ſuffer in the perſon of Chriſt, and he was by nature void of a human mind, then it follows, that it was the mere animal body of Chriſt that ſuffered for original ſin, in which, intelligent nature, either divine or human, did not bear a part. But if it be ſuppoſed, that the hypoſtatical union united the divine nature with that of the human, conſiſting of cogitation and ſenſation, then the previous arguments ſtand fairly oppoſed to the doctrine of the hypoſtatical union, which is ſubmitted to the reader.

Chapter

Chapter XIII.

SECTION I.

Of the impoſſibility of tranſlating an Infalliable Revelation from its original copies, and preſerving it entire through all the revolutions of the World, and Viciſſitudes of human learning to our time.

ADMITTING for argument ſake that the ſcriptures of the old and new Teſtament were originally of divine ſupernatural inſpiration, and that their firſt manuſcript copies were the infallible inſtitutions of God, yet to trace them from their reſpective antient dead languages, and different and diverſe tranſlations, from the obſcure hieroglyphical pictures or characters, in which they were firſt written, through all the viciſſitudes and alterations of human learning, prejudices, ſuperſtitions, enthuſiaſms and diverſities of intereſts and manners, to our time, ſo as to preſent us with a perfect edition from its premiſed infallible original manuſcript copies, would be impoſſible. The various and progreſſive methods of learning, with the inſurmountable difficulties of tranſlating any ſuppoſed antiquated written revelation would not admit of it, as the ſucceeding obſervations on language and grammar will fully evince.

In thoſe early ages of learning, hieroglyphical pictures were expreſſive of ideas; as for inſtance, a ſnake quirled (a poſition common to that venomous reptile) was an emblem of eternity, and the picture of a lion, a repreſentation of power, and ſo every beaſt, bird, reptile, inſect and fiſh, had in their reſpective pictures, particular ideas annexed to them, which varied with the arbitrary cuſtom and common conſent of the ſeveral ſeperate nations, among whom this way of communicating ideas was practiced, in ſome ſenſe analogous to what is practiſed at this day by different nations in connecting particular ideas to certain ſounds or words written in characters, which according to certain rules of grammar conſtitute the ſeveral languages. But the hieroglyphical manner of writing by living emblems, and perhaps in ſome inſtances by other pictures, was very abſtruſe, and inadequate to communicate that multiplicity and diverſity of ideas, which are requiſite for the purpoſe of hiſtory, argumentation or general knowledge in any of the ſciences or concerns of life; which myſtical way of communicating ideas underwent a variety of alterations and improvements, though not ſo much as that of characters and grammar has done; for in the hierogliphical way of communicating their ideas, there was no ſuch thing as ſpelling, or what is now called orthography, which has been perpetually refining and altering, ever ſince characters, ſyllables, words or grammar have been brought into uſe, and which will admit of correction and improvement as long as mankind continue in the world. For which reaſon the original of all languages is abſorbed and loſt in the multiplicity of alterations, and refinements, which have in all ages taken place, ſo that it is out of the power of all the Etymologiſts and Lexiconiſts now living, to explain the ideas, which were antiently connected with thoſe hieroglyphical figures or words, and which may have compoſed the original of any language, written in characters, in thoſe obſelete and antiquated ages, when learning and ſcience were in their infancy. Since the beneficial art of printing has arrived to any conſiderable degree of perfection, the etymology of words, in the ſcientifical and learned languages, has been conſiderably well underſtood; though imperfectly, as the various opinions of the learned concerning it may witneſs. But ſince the æra of printing, the knowledge of the ancient learning has been in a great meaſure, or in moſt reſpects, wholly loſt; and inaſmuch as the modern ſubſtitute is much better, it is no loſs at all. Some of the old Engliſh authors are at this day quite unintelligible, and others in their reſpective later publications, more or leſs ſo. The laſt century and an half has done more towards the perfecting of grammar, and purifying the languages, than the world had ever done before.

I do not underſtand Latin, Greek or Hebrew, in which languages, it is ſaid, that the ſeveral original manuſcripts of the ſcriptures were written; but I am informed by the learned therein, that, like other languages, they have gone through their reſpective alterations and refinements, which muſt have been the caſe, except they reached their greateſt perfection in their firſt compoſition; of which the progreſſive condition of man could not admit. So that the learned in thoſe languages, at this day, know but little or nothing how they were ſpoken or written when the firſt manuſcript copies of the ſcriptures were compoſed; and conſequently, are not able to inform us, whether their preſent tranſlations do, any of them, perfectly agree with their reſpective original premiſed infallible manuſcript copies, or not. And inaſmuch as the ſeveral Engliſh tranſlations of the Bible do materially differ from each other, it evinces the confuſed and blundering condition in which it has been handed down to us.

The clergy often inform us from the deſk, that the tranſlation of the Bible, which is now in uſe in this country, is erroneous, after having read ſuch and ſuch a paſſage of it, in either Latin, Greek or Hebrew, they frequently give us to underſtand, that inſtead of the preſent tranſlation, it ſhould have been rendered thus and thus in Engliſh, but never repreſent to us how it was read and underſtood in the antiquated and myſtical figures or characters of thoſe languages, when the manuſcripts of ſcripture were firſt written, or how it has been preſerved and handed down entire, through every refinement of thoſe languages, to the preſent condition of Latin, Greek and Hebrew. Probably this is too abſtruſe a ſeries of retroſpective learning for their ſcholarſhip, and near or quite as foreeign from their knowledge as from that of their hearers.

It is not to be ſuppoſed that all the alterations which have taken place in language, have been merely by improving it. In many inſtances, ignorance, accident and cuſtom has varied it to its diſadvantage, but it has nevertheleſs been ſubject to correction, and generally ſpeaking has been altered for the better, yet, by one means or other has been ſo fluctuating and unſtable, as that an infallible revelation could not have been genuinely preſerved, through all the viciſſitudes and revolutions of learning, for more than ſeventeen hundred years laſt paſt to this day.

The diverſity of the Engliſh language is repreſented with great accuracy by Mr. Samuel Johnſon, the celebrated lexicographer, in the ſamples of different ages, in his hiſtory of the Engliſh language, ſubjoined to the preface of his Dictionary, to which the curious are referred for the obſervance of the various ſpecimens.

SECTION II.

Remarks concerning Mr. Ditton's Conceſſions and concluſion reſpecting the authority of the Evangelical, and other ancient Authors, and of the Errors Corruptions and ſpuriouſneſs, to which they are expoſed.

MR. DITTON (a celebrated writer in vindication of the Chriſtian revelation) frankly admits, that the ſcripture writings may have been liable to contract faults, and have been ſubject to the common calamity, as he calls it, which has more or leſs attended all books, ever ſince there have been books in the world. His own words are theſe, "I do not ſuppoſe every letter, ſyllable, or word, is exactly the ſame as when the laſt hands of their reſpective authors were ſet to them; the learned know well enough, that there are a multitude of ways, by which books may be abuſed, and that perhaps no book in the world, of any moment, has ever eſcaped this fate, but had its ſhare of corruption in the common calamity at one time or other, either more or leſs.

"THEY know how writings may be worn out and defaced by time, the great conſumer of all things, as well as to what injuries they may be expoſed, by the ordinary accidents of life: how eaſy it is for miſtakes to ariſe by a bare omiſſion in points of diſtinction, or from the uſe of ſymbols and characters, or any ſort of contractions and abridgments in writings. How he, that dictates to another, may poſſibly not judge rightly of the ſeveral letters, whoſe beauty is either loſt by age, or perhaps was but baſely written at firſt. How he may miſtake thoſe letters which are of a reſembling ſhape and figure, one for another; how inaccurately he might pronounce his words, and ſo lead him that tranſcribes into an error, or perhaps ſeeing the ſame word or words various times repeated, might eaſily ſkip from one to the other, and ſo leave out all in the author that was between them; or perhaps for want of ſkill or judgment in the matter he is concerned in, may transfer ordinary notes and gloſſes from the margin into the text or body of the book.

" The learned know likewiſe, that thoſe who write, as well as thoſe who dictate may commit many miſtakes; they may hear what is dictated to them imperfectly and by halves; they may be more intent upon ſome notions in their own minds than the buſineſs lying before them, and ſo write not ſo much what they hear as what they are at that time thinking of; or at leaſt may poſſibly ſhape and modify what they hear, too much according to their own way of ſpeaking and thinking. ; but above all by want of ſkill in grammar, eſpecially the knowledge of the ancient orthography, by which means, all the changes in the forms of letters would be unknown to them.

"It is not unlikely,that many ſuch errors ſhould be committed, as would require ſome ſkill and judgment to diſcover and correct afterwards. I need not add the careleſſneſs of thoſe who have the inſpection of libraries, the raſh and preſumptuous attempts of critics, and the ſly, villainous practices of impoſtors, in ſome circumſtances, may be the occaſion of miſchief and diſorder this way.

"All theſe things muſt be allowed,becauſe they are certainly true in fact, as might be proved, were this a proper place for it. Now upon theſe and ſuch like conſiderations, I very eaſily allow, that the writings of the old chriſtian authors, might, in proceſs of time, be expoſed in ſome meaſure, to the ordinary fate of the world ; I mean, that ſuch corruptions may have crept into them, as are very poſſible and likely to ariſe from ſome or other of the aforementioned cauſes ; but what will any man infer from this ? We all agree that this derogates nothing from the credit of any writing ; we do not reject a book becauſe we have ſome proofs of its having ſuffered in matters of leſs moment; for if we ſhould proceed upon this principle, it is demonſtrable in fact, that we ſhould leave ourſelves no authors to read or quote, but muſt abandon them by whole catalogues to the flames, even thoſe whoſe authority we lay the greateſt ſtreſs upon, and think it infinitely ridiculous to queſtion.

"I MUST therefore make a ſtand here with this concluſion, before I proceed any further, *viz.* that we muſt either not reject the writings of the Evangeliſts and Apoſtles as ſpurious, or fundamentally corrupted; upon the account of ſuch faults as we find to be common with them and the works of other authors, which we receive as genuine; or elſe we muſt agree to reject both the one and the other, and ſo, together with the New Teſtament, deny the credit of all books, that we cannot demonſtrate to have been leſs abuſed than the ſyſtem of the Chriſtian Religion has been; and if ſo, I believe, I may ſafely aſk the critics, and all thoſe men whoſe learning lies only in great reading, what is become of all your boaſted knowledge? and to what purpoſe have you ſpent your time in poring upon a parcel of old authors, which you are perfectly cheated in, and who never talked any of thoſe things, which you ſo much value and admire in them ? So that laying all theſe matters together, the many ways that there are, by which writings may come to contract faults, as alſo what has actually come to paſs in the certain abuſe or corruption of books, which celebrated men of old ſo freely owned, and complained of; it would be an indiſcreet and ridiculous piece of zeal to ſay, that every letter ſyllable or word of thoſe evangelical and apoſtolical books, had been preſerved, in the ſame good order end purity, with which they were at firſt compoſed, through all the ſucceeding ages and revolutions of the world down to the preſent time. On the other hand, I am ready to allow, that they may in length of time have ſuffered ſome of thoſe common misfortunes, which books have always been expoſed to ever ſince there were books in the world. But what I affirm, is this, *viz.* that thoſe writings which are now in our hands, are the very writings which the Evangeliſts and Apoſtles left behind them; and that not only as to the main matter and ſubſtance of them, but alſo as to all circumſtances of neceſſary moment to Chriſtian doctrine and practice. ſo far are they from being the inventions of other perſons impoſed on the world in their name and ſtead."

This writer having ingeniouſly enumerated a great variety of probable natural cauſes of the corruptions and abuſes of antient writings, part of which are manifeſtly unavoidable, as well with reſpect to the productions of the old Chriſtian authors, as of books in general, particularly from the "want of ſkill in grammar, and eſpecially of the knowledge of the antient orthography, by which means" alſo "the changes in the forms of letters" are forgotten and unknown, from all which, together with a complication of other poſſible and probable cauſes of the abuſe of books, he obſerves, when ſpeaking of the evangelical and apoſtolical writings, "I do not ſuppoſe, that every letter, ſyllable or word is exactly the ſame, as when the laſt hands of their reſpective authors were ſet to them. The learned know very well, that there are a multitude of ways, by which books may be abuſed, and that perhaps no book in the world of any moment has ever eſcaped this fate, but had its ſhare of corruption in the common calamity;" further adding, that "it would be an indiſcreet and ridiculous piece of zeal, to ſay, that every letter, ſyllable or word, of theſe evangelical and apoſtolical books, had been preſerved in the ſame good order and purity, with which they were firſt compoſed, through all the ſucceeding ages and revolutions of the world down to the preſent time. On the other hand I am ready to allow, that they may in length of time have ſuffered ſome of thoſe common misfortunes, which books have always been expoſed to, ever ſince there were books in the world. But what I affirm, is this, *viz.* that thoſe writings, which are now in our hands, are the very writings, which the Apoſtles and Evangeliſts left behind them, and that not only as to the main matter and ſubſtance of them, but alſo as to all circumſtances of neceſſary moment to Chriſtian doctrine and practice: ſo far are they from being the invention of other perſons impoſed upon the world in their name and ſtead."

THAT theſe writings now in our hands are the very writings which the Apoſtles and Evangeliſts left behind them, cannot be in fact true in any ſenſe whatever, except it be pre-ſuppoſed, that the ideas now exhibited, in the different languages, in their preſent tranſlations, are perfectly the ſame, as they may be ſuppoſed to have been in their original compoſition, by the premiſed dictation of the divine ſpirit. For none will pretend that at this day we have the original copies, or if we had, that the preſent generation would be able to underſtand them in conſequence of the perpetual alterations and refinements in language, (from thoſe hieroglyphical and myſtical times) and conſequently of communicating the ideas of the human mind, which at beſt was very imperfectly done in the early ages of the world and infancy of learning, when the ſcripture writings were firſt compoſed and promulgated; as has been diſcuſſed in the preceeding ſection.

It is by letters, ſyllables and words, that we receive the ideas of the preſent tranſlations, o thoſe ſuppoſed chriſtian authors; and if every letter, ſyllable and word are not "exactly the ſame, as when the laſt hands of their reſpective authors were ſet to them," or at leaſt, that the ſame original ideas without variation muſt have been handed down through all the viciſſitudes of languages ages and revolutions of the world to our time; or in fact "thoſe writings now in our hands," or any others denominated ſcriptural, are not the very ſame writings which the original Bible writers left behind them: This then is the queſtion, admiting that the Bible in its original manuſcript copies was infallible, whether there could have been an infallible compiling, re-drafting, tranſlating, re-printing and perpetuation of it, ſo that the preſent tranſlation could exhibit to us perfectly the ſame ideas as were contained in its premiſed original infallible copies, or not?

Mr. Ditton, after recapitulating a multiplicity of cauſes of the corruptions and abuſes of ancient books in general, part of which are manifeſtly unavoidable, ſome poſſible, and others in the higheſt degree probable, ſays, "but what will any man infer from this? We all agree that this derogates nothing from the credit and authority of any writing; we do not reject a book as ſpurious, becauſe we have ſome proofs of its having ſuffered in matters of leſs moment; for if we ſhould proceed upon this principle, it is demonſtrable we ſhould leave ourſelves no authors to read or quote, but muſt abandon them by whole catalogues to the flames."

On the poſition of an immediate revelation of God to mankind, the divine authority of it to ſucceding generations, depends altogether upon an infallible method of preſerving and perpetuating of it entire and uncorrupted. For it is of no importance to us at this age of the world, whether revelation was, in its original, divinely inſpired or not, if ſo be that the preſent tranſlations, either through imperfection or impoſture, have become ſpurious.

But it may be objected, in favor of revelation, that probably ſome part of it may have been preſerved,

ſerved, agreeable to the original ſuppoſed inſpiration of it. But, who but God can tell us, which part it is, admitting that any of it ſtill remains genuine. Allowing this poſition, it ſtand in eminent need of a re-inſpiration, and a few miracles as a proof of the certainty of it.

In human compoſitions, alterations, corrections abridgements, and the like, are moſt generally ſerviceable and uſeful to mankind; but whether we approve of ancient or modern authors, or of the refinements of either or both of them, it matters not, provided we attend to the beſt reaſonings in order to perfect our minds. But if, through accident or impoſture, or the corruption common to books, any of them may be depreciated and perverted, yet there are no rules of pretended infallibility; we judge of them according to our reaſon. To ſuch part as recommends itſelf to our underſtanding we give credit, and the reſidue we reject for human performances; whether oral or written they claim no divine authority over us; but we judge that to be the moſt divine in which there is the moſt reaſon; and thus it is that human writings are always ſubject to be corrected by reaſon.

But there is all odds with reſpect to a ſuppoſed divine revelation to man, for this claims an authority of controuling human reaſon (and well it might, if it was the infallible revelation of God.) In order that it ſhould be dignified with ſuch authority, it ſhould have been exempted from the common calamity which has attended books in general. Other books are not of that importance to the ſalvation of mankind, as it is pretended thoſe ſcriptural writings are, ſo that reaſon would prompt us to conclude, that books, which claim ſuch a character (among other peculiarities that of infallible) ſhould have been exempted from that liability of contracting faults, to which other books are expoſed in this deceptible world, ſhining in their original luſtre and purity, thereby convincing the world of God's care of them, and conſequently of their divine original."

But it may be objected, that thoſe divine writings having been once delivered to the world, muſt neceſſarily be ſubject to the common calamity or corruptions of books in general, inaſmuch as they are, like other books, committed to the care and preſervation of man.

This objection operates againſt revelation concluſively, and evinces the cogency of the foregoing arguments, that the refinements of language, the alterations of orthography, of grammar, tranſlations, and the like, muſt have deprived the Bible of its premiſed original infallibility; or in fine is a conceſſion, that the manner of preſerving and continuing it in the world, is weak, imperfect, and ſubject to errors and corruptions of various kinds; and conſequently, at this æra of the world, not infallible; which reduces it to the the ſtate and condition of other writings. For the ſcriptures muſt be conſidered as being either fallible or infallible, ſince there is no third way or mean between theſe two; for that which is not abſolutely infallible and perfect, is fallible and imperfect; and ſince the preſent tranſlation of the Bible is manifeſtly of the latter of theſe characters, it is not authorized to control human reaſon; but on the other hand, reaſon ought to control the Bible, in thoſe particulars in which it may be ſuppoſed to deviate from reaſon.

BY comparing the before quoted conceſſion of Mr. Ditton with reſpect to the corruptions and abuſes of books, which ſays he, "celebrated men of old have ſo freely owned and complained of," with his affirmation, that appoſtolical and evangelical "writings, which are now in our hands, are the very writings, which the Apoſtles and Evangeliſts left behind them; and not only as to the main matter and ſubſtance of them, but alſo as to all circumſtances of neceſſary moment to Chriſtian doctrine and practice," it will amount nearly to a contradiction in terms. Upon what principles can any perſons aſſure themſelves, that the ſeveral books of the old Chriſtian authors might not as likely ſuffer, by contracting errors or faults in their manner of being handed down to us, in the ſubſtance and eſſentials of them, as in matters trivial, and of leſs moment? Certainly the want of ſkill in grammar, or of the knowledge of the antient orthography, would render it, not only precarious and uncertain, but impoſſible, for modern tranſlators rightly to underſtand the original ideas, annexed to the ſeveral ſymbols and ſorts of characters, which were grown or growing by degrees out of uſe, and had become, or were becoming obſolete and unintelligible; which perplexities would equally affect every part of revelation, whether eſſential or trivial. The ſame may be argued reſpecting all and every of the natural impediments attending the preſerving entire and uncorrupted the writings of an antiquated revelation.

FROM what has been already obſerved, we may infer, that the errors, miſtakes or abuſes of the books of revelation, might as probably happen with reſpect to the ſubſtance or ſubject matter and eſſential doctrines thereof, as with reſpect to ſuch parts as may be ſuppoſed to be of little or no conſequence "to Chriſtian doctrine and practice," inaſmuch as the main ſyſtem, together with its ſubordinate parts muſt have been expoſed to all and ſingular of the beforementioned cauſes of abuſes and corruptions, common to the books of the old Chriſtian authors, except in the inſtance of cunning and ſly impoſtors, who would more likely ſtrike at the eſſential doctrines of a ſuppoſed revelation, than at the leſs or more inconſiderable parts thereof. For an impoſtor could gain no valuable advantage to himſelf, or propoſe ſuch a motive, unleſs he could alter it very eſſentially by adding to or diminiſhing from it. Mahomet himſelf did "not deny the miſſion of Moſes or of Chriſt, or the divine authority of the ſcriptures, but charged both Jews and Chriſtians with perverting them, and inſinuated that he was ſent by God to purge them from their errors, and reſtore the law of God to its primitive purity." In fine, he managed his pretentions with that art and addreſs, that he entirely new modeled the ſcriptures, as he pretended was agreeable to the patriarchal purity; and it is altogether probable, that the Popes, and Romiſh clergy have made near or quite as great alterations in it: At the reformation the Proteſtant clergy exploded the Apocrypha, condemning the ſtory of Tobit and his Dog; but the reſt of the ſcriptures they accepted as cannonical, juſt as the Popes and their creatures had coined it to their hands, of which more will be obſerved in the ſequel of this chapter.

BUT to return to the thread of this diſcourſe; we will premiſe, that the Chriſtians will allow that there was not, in the original of the Bible writings, any part ſo trivial as to be of no moment or importance "to Chriſtian doctrine and practice;" for if they do not, they would be hard put to it to juſtify the wiſdom of God in making it in the firſt place any part of their revelation. They muſt therefore be obliged to own, that every part was of importance as to doctrine and practice, and that the leaſt, as well as greateſt variation, from its original compoſition (which they ſuppoſe to have been dictated by the divine ſpirit) is in fact, ſo far forth as the variation may be ſuppoſed to have taken place in the preſent tranſlation, a derogation from, and ſubverſion of God's ſuppoſed revelation. Mr. Ditton admits, that it would be "a ridiculous piece of zeal to ſay that every letter," ſyllable or word "of thoſe Evangelical and Apoſtolical books had been preſerved in the ſame good order and purity, with which they were firſt compoſed, through all the ſucceeding ages and revolutions of the world down to the preſent time." Nor is it poſſible for any or all the Chriſtian world, at this day, to underſtand, how far, or in what particulars, the preſent tranſlations of the ſcriptures may have been varied from their ſeveral originals, or what they were, or whether the whole is not eſſentially corrupted and become ſpurious. Of one thing we may be certain, which is, that it is, in the nature of things (the laws of the world we live in, and the condition of mankind therein duly conſidered, particularly the viciſſitudes of learning and manner of tranſlating and preſerving the writings and ideas of antient authors) utterly impoſſible, that there could have been a genuine and perfect compiling and tranſlation thereof. It would be the greateſt arrogance and vanity for any individuals or councils to pretend to ſever the errors and impoſtures, which, at one time or other, may have crept into them, from that which may be ſuppoſed ſtill to be genuine, or to diſtinguiſh the premiſed perfect from imperfect; which would require the omniſcience of a God, inſtead of the fallible knowledge acquired by the erudition of man, and is manifeſtly ſubverſive of the infallibility and divine authority of revelation.

FROM which we infer, that ancient written revelations were never of divine authority; for it is inconſiſtent with the wiſdom and goodneſs of God to have made a revelation of his mind and will to mankind, for a rule of duty and practice to them, and to be continued to the lateſt generations as ſuch, when at the ſame time it is demonſtrable, that God has ſo conſtituted the laws and courſe of the world, and the circumſtances of mankind therein, as would, in the nature of things, neceſſarily make a revelation void, on account of the unavoidable obſtacles, which his providence in the conſtitution of things, has laid in the way, as an impregnable barrier againſt a perfect tranſlation and perpetuation thereof.

SECTION III.

The variety of Annotations and Expoſitions of the Scriptures, together with the diverſity of Sectaries evinces their fallibility.

EVERY commentary and annotation on the Bible, implicitly declares its fallibility; for if the ſcriptures remained genuine and entire, they would not ſtand in need of commentaries and expoſitions, but would ſhine in their infallible luſtre and purity without them. What an idle phantom is it for mortals to aſſay to illuſtrate and explain to mankind, that which God may be ſuppoſed to have undertaken to do, by the immediate inſpiration of his ſpirit? Do they underſtand how to define or explain it better than God may be ſuppoſed to have done? This is not ſuppoſable; upon what ground then do theſe multiplicity of comments ariſe, except it be pre-ſuppoſed that the preſent tranſlations of the Bible have, by ſome means or other, become fallible and imperfect, and therefore need to be refined and explained? and if ſo, it has loſt the ſtamp of divine authority; provided in its original compoſition it may be ſuppoſed to have been poſſeſſed of it

To conſtrue or ſpiritualize the Bible is the ſame as to inſpire it over again, by the judgment, fancy or enthuſiaſm of men; and thus the common people, by receiving God's ſuppoſed revelation at ſecondary hands (whether at the thouſandth or ten thouſandth remove from its firſt premiſed inſpiration they know not) cannot in fact be taught by the revelation of God. Add to this the diverſe and claſhing expoſitions of the Bible, among which are ſo many flagrant proofs of the fallibility and uncertainty of ſuch teachings, as muſt convince even bigots, that every one of thoſe expoſitions are erroneous, *except their own.*

It has been owing to different comments on the ſcriptures, that chriſtians have been divided into ſectaries. Every commentator, who could influence a party to embrace his comment, put himſelf at the head of a diviſion of Chriſtians; as Luther, Calvin, and Arminius, laid the foundation of the ſectaries who bear their names; and the Socinians were called after the ſciſmatical Socinius: The ſame may be ſaid of each of the ſectaries. Thus it is that different commentaries or acceptations of the original meaning of the Scriptures, have divided the Chriſtian world into the diviſions and ſubdiviſions of which it conſiſts at preſent. Nor was there ever a diviſion or ſubdiviſion among Jews, Chriſtians or Mahometans, reſpecting their notions or opinions of religion, but what was occaſioned by commentating on the ſcriptures, or elſe by later pretended inſpired revelations from God in addition thereto. The law of Moſes was the firſt pretended immediate revelation from God, which reſpects the Bible, and after that in ſucceſſion the ſeveral revelations of the prophets, and laſt of all (in the Chriſtian ſyſtem) the revelations of Jeſus Chriſt and his apoſtles, who challenged a right of aboliſhing the prieſthood of Moſes; Chriſt claiming to be the antitype of which the inſtitution of ſacrifices and ceremonial part of the law of Moſes was emblematical; but this infringement of the prerogative of the Levitical prieſts gave ſuch offence, not only to them, but to the Jews as a nation, that they rejected chriſtianity, and have not ſubſcribed to the divine authority of it to this day, holding to the law of Moſes and the prophets. However Chriſtianity made a great progreſs in the world, and has been very much divided into ſectaries, by the cauſes previouſly aſſigned.

"Mahomet taking notice of the numerous ſects and diviſions among Chriſtians, in his journies to Paleſtine, &c. thought it would not be difficult to introduce a new religion, and make himſelf high prieſt and ſovereign of the people." This he finally effected, proſecuting his ſcheme ſo far, that he new modelled the ſcriptures, preſenting them (as he ſaid) in their original purity, and called his diſciples after his own name. He gained great numbers of proſelytes and became their ſovereign,in civil, military and ſpiritual matters, inſtituted the order of the myſtical prieſthood, and gave the world a new Bible by the name of the Alcoran; which he gives us to underſtand was communicated to him from God, by the intermediate agency of the angel Gabriel, chapter by chapter. "His diſciples at this day inhabit a great part of the richeſt countries in the world, and are ſuppoſed to be more numerous than the Chriſtians," and are as much if not more divided into ſectaries, from cauſes ſimilar to thoſe which produced the diviſion of Chriſtians, viz. the different commentatories on and expoſitions of the Alcoran. The Mufti, or prieſts, repreſented the doctrines and precepts of the Alkoran in a variety of lights different from each other, each of them claiming the purity of the original and infallible truths preſcribed to the world by Mahomet, their great reformer of chriſtianity. For though the ſeveral ſectaries of Mahometans differ, reſpecting the meaning of their Alkoran, yet they all hold to the truth and divine authority thereof, the ſame as the Chriſtian ſectaries do concerning their Bible: ſo that all the different opinions which ever did, or at preſent do ſubſiſt, between Jews, Chriſtians and Mahometans, may be reſolved into one conſideration, viz. the want of a right underſtanding of the original of the ſcriptures. All ſat out at firſt, as they imagined, from the truth of God's word, (except the impoſtors) concluding, that they had an infalible guide, and have, by one means or other, been guided into as many oppoſite faiths as human invention has been capable of fabricating; each ſect among the whole, exulting in their happy ignorance, believing that they are favored with an infallible revelation for their direction.

It alters not the preſent argument, whether the ſcriptures were originally true or not; for though they be ſuppoſed to have been either true or falſe, or a mixture of both, yet they could never have been handed down entire and uncorrupted to the preſent time, through the various changes and perpetual refinements of learning and language; this is not merely a matter of ſpeculative and argumentative demonſtration, the palpable certainty of it ſtands confeſſed in every Jewiſh, Chriſtian and Mahometan ſectary.

SECTION IV.

On the compiling of the Manuſcripts of the Scriptures into one Volume, and of its ſeveral Tranſlations. The Infallibility of the Popes, and of their chartered Right to remit or retain Sins. And of the Impropriety of their being truſted with a Revelation from God.

THE manuſcripts of ſcripture, which are ſaid to have been originally written on ſcolls of bark, long before the invention of paper or printing, and are ſaid to compoſe our preſent Bible, were in a looſe and confuſed condition, ſcattered about in the world, depoſited nobody knows how or where, and at different times were compiled into one volume. The four goſpels are by the learned generally admitted to have been wrote many years after Chriſt, particularly that of St. John: and ſundry other goſpels in the primitive ages of chriſtianity were received as divine by ſome of its then ſectaries, which have unfortunately not met with orthodox approbation in ſubſequent æras of the deſpotiſm of the church;

THE tranſlation of the ſcriptures by Ptolemy Philadelphus, king of Egypt, was before Chriſt, and therefore could not include the writings of the new teſtament in his tranſlation, and "whether by ſeventy two interpreters, and in the manner as is commonly related, is juſtly queſtioned." But where, at what time, and by whom, the ſcriptures of the old and new teſtament were firſt compiled into one volume, is what I do not underſtand: but was it a longer or ſhorter period after Chriſt, it alters not the preſent argument materially, ſince the ſcattered manuſcripts were in a looſe and confuſed condition for a long time; and the grand query is, when the compilers of thoſe manuſcripts collected them together in order to form them into one volume, how they could have underſtood the ſuppoſed divine writings, or ſymbolical figures, with the ideas originally connected with them, and diſtinguiſh them from thoſe which were merely human, and in compariſon of the others are called prophane. To underſtand this diſtinction would require a new revelation, as much as may be ſuppoſed neceſſary for compoſing the original manuſcripts themſelves; but it is not pretended that the compilers or tranſlators of the Bible were inſpired by the divine ſpirit in the doing and compleating their reſpective buſineſs; ſo that human reaſon, fancy, or ſome latent deſign, muſt needs have been ſubſtituted, in diſtinguiſhing the ſuppoſed divine and human writings apart, and in giving a perfect tranſcript of the original manuſcripts. Now admitting that the compilers were really honeſt principled men (which is more than we are certain of) it would follow, that they would be obliged to cull out of the mixed maſs of premiſed divine and human writings, ſuch as to them appeared to be divine, which would make them to be the ſole arbitrators of the divinity that they were compiling to be handed down to poſterity as the infallible word of God, which is a great ſtretch of prerogative for mortal and fallible man to undertake, and as great a weakneſs in others to ſubſcribe to it, as of divine authority.

Mr. Fenning, in his Dictionary diffinition of the word Bible, ſnbjoins the following hiſtory of its tranſlations. “The tranſlation of this ſacred volume was begun very early in this kingdom,” [England] "and ſome part of it was done by King Alfred. Adelmus tranſlated the Pſalms into Saxon in 709, other parts were done by Edfrid or Ecbert in 730, the whole by Bede in 731. Treviſa publiſhed the whole in Engliſh in 1357. Tindal's was brought higher in 1534, reviſed and altered in 1538, publiſhed with a preface of Cranmers in 1549. In 1551, another tranſlation was publiſhed, which was reviſed by ſeveral biſhops, was printed with their alterations in 1560. In 1607 a new tranſlation was publiſhed by authority, which is that in preſent uſe." From this account it appears, that from the firſt tranſlation of the Bible by Treviſa, into Engliſh, in 1357, it has been reviſed, altered, and paſſed through ſix different publications, the laſt of which is ſaid to have been done by authority, which I conclude means that of the King, whoſe prerogative in giving us a divine revelation, can no more be eſteemed valid than that of other men, though he may be poſſeſſed of an arbitrary power within the limits of his realm to prevent any further correction and publication of it. As to the changes it underwent previous to Treviſa's tranſlation, in which time it was moſt expoſed to corruptions of every kind, we will not at preſent particularly conſider, but only obſerve that thoſe tranſlations could not, every one of them, be perfect, ſince they were diverſe from each other, in conſequence of their reſpective reviſions and corrections; nor is it poſſible that the Bible, in any of its various editions could be perfect, any more than all and every of thoſe perſons who have acted a part in tranſmitting them down to our time may be ſuppoſed to be ſo: for perfection does not pertain to man, but is the eſſential prerogative of God.

The Roman Catholic's, to avail the evils of imperfection, fallibility and impoſture of man, have ſet up the Pope to be infallible; this is their ſecurity againſt being miſguided in their faith, and by aſcribing holineſs to him, ſecure themſelves from impoſture; a deception, which is incompatible with holineſs. So that in matters of faith, they have nothing more to do, but to believe as their church believes. Their authority for abſolving or retaining ſins is very extraordinary; however, their charter is from Chriſt (admitting them to be his Vicars, and the ſucceſſors of St. Peter) and the preſent Engliſh tranſlation of the Bible warrants it. The commiſſion is in theſe words; "*And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of Heaven, and whoever thou ſhalt bind on Earth, ſhall be bound in Heaven; and whatſoever thou ſhalt looſe on Earth, ſhall be looſed in Heaven. Whoſeſoever ſins ye remit, they are remitted unto them and whoſeſoever ſins ye retain, they are retained.*" That

St. Peter or his ſucceſſors ſhould have a power of binding and determining the ſtate and condition of mankind in the world to come by remitting or retaining ſins, is too great a power to be intruſted in men, as it interferes with the providence and prerogative of God, who on this poſition would be exempted from judging the world (as it would interfere with the chartered prerogative of the Popes in their remitting or retaining of ſins, admitting it to have been genuine) precluding the divine retribution of juſtice; we may therefore from the authority of reaſon, conclude it to be ſpurious. It was a long ſucceſſion of ages that all Chriſtendom were dupes to the See of Rome, in which time it is too evident to be denied, that the Holy Fathers obtruded a great deal of pious fraud on their devotees; all public worſhip was read to the people in unknown languages, as it is to this day in Roman Catholic countries. Nor has the Bible, in thoſe countries, to this time, been permitted to be publiſhed in any but the learned languages, which affords great opportunity to the Romiſh church to fix it to anſwer their lucrative purpoſes. Nor is it to be ſuppoſed that they want the inclination to do it. The before recited grant of the power of the abſolution of ſin, to St. Peter in particular, was undoubtedly of their contrivance.

In ſhort, reaſon would prompt us to conclude; that had God, in very deed, made a revelation of his mind and will to mankind, as a rule of duty and practice to them, and to be continued as ſuch to the lateſt poſterity, he would in the courſe of his providence have ordered matters ſo that it ſhould have been depoſited, tranſlated, and kept, in the hands of men of a more unexceptionable character than thoſe Holy Cheats can pretend to.

Witchcraft and Prieſtcraft, were introduced into this world together, in its non-age; and has gone on, hand in hand together, until about half a century paſt, when witchcraft began to be diſcredited, and is at preſent almoſt exploded, both in Europe, and America. This diſcovery has depreciated Prieſtcraft, on the ſcale of at leaſt fifty per cent. per annum, and rendered it highly probable that the improvement of ſucceeding generations, in the knowledge of nature, and ſcience, will exalt the reaſon of mankind, above the tricks and impoſture of Prieſts, and bring them back to the religion of nature and truth; ennoble their minds, and be the means of cultivating concord, and mutual love in ſociety, and of extending charity, and good will to all intelligent beings, throughout the univerſe; exalt the divine character, and lay a perminent foundation for truth and reliance on providence; eſtabliſh our hopes and proſpects of immortality, and be conducive to every deſirable conſequence, in this world, and that which is to come; which will crown the ſcene of human felicity in this ſublunary ſtate of being and probation; which can never be compleated, while we are under the power and tyranny of Prieſts, ſince as it ever has, it ever will be their intereſt, to invalidate the law of nature and reaſon, in order to eſtabliſh ſyſtems incompatible therewith.

Chapter XIV.

SECTION I.

An Hiſtorical Teſtimony of Miracles inſufficient to prove irrational Doctrines.

THE method which the advocates for the Chriſtian revelation have moſt generally taken, to prove its divine authority, is, by making uſe of the miracles, which are ſaid to have been done by Moſes and the Prophets, and by Chriſt and his Apoſtles, for that purpoſe. Thoſe miracles, they either take for granted to be facts, or by a circumlocution of argumentative concluſions, deduced from the antiquated hiſtory of miracles, and principally from the ſcripture writings themſelves, they pretend to evince the reality of them. This hiſtorical narrative of the facts of the miracles, they call by the name of a moral evidence, which, they tell us, lays an indiſpenſible obligation on thoſe of mankind to whom it is propoſed, to aſſent to the truth of the miracles. Having thus, as they premiſe, evinced the fact of the miracles, they proceed to make uſe of them as being demonſtrative of the divine authority of revelation; the ſame as though the miracles were inconteſtibly true; arguing, that it would be inconſiſtent with the moral perfections of God, to exert his power to work miracles for the confirmation of the divinity of revelation, and miſſion of promulgators, was it not of the inſtitution of God; for otherwiſe, ſay they, "God by working the miracles, would have ſet his own ſeal to the deluſion;" and thus, they think they have proved the truth and divine authority of the Chriſtian revelation; which inference muſt be admitted to be juſt, if ſo be that in very deed, God had wrought the miracles for that purpoſe; but admitting the eſſential doctrines of their revelation, or its main ſyſtem, to be repugnant to right reaſoning, and to the divine character, the inference muſt follow, that God never wrought the miracles to confirm it; for that, by working them, he would (as in the other premiſed caſe) "have ſet his own ſeal to the deluſion." It is therefore, abſolutely incumbent on the advocates of revelation, in the firſt place, to evince from reaſon, that their reſpective revelations are conſiſtent with truth and the moral perfections of God, or they cannot, with any propriety, make uſe of the evidence of miracles, as a proof their divinity, or of the divine legation of their reſpective promulgators; which conſideration naturally promps the inquiſitive to a reconſideration of the arguments contained in the preceding chapters, concerning revelation, and the Bible doctrines thereof, and to determine whether they are concluſive or not. If thoſe arguments are juſt, they preclude miracles in general from having any exiſtence in the creation and providence of God; but ſhould thoſe reaſonings be thought inconcluſive, yet, as we have before obſerved, that as miracles are urged as a proof of the divine inſtitution of revelation, admitting the fundamental doctrines thereof are repugnant to reaſon and truth, it muſt of conſequence, invalidate the evidence of the fact of the miracles; for as the Chriſtians juſtly infer, if God wrought the miracles to confirm revelation, it muſt be admitted to be of divine authority; ſo on the other hand, if the principle doctrines of revelation are inconſiſtent with reaſon, or the moral rectitude of things, then it follows, that God did not work the miracles to evince the truth of it; for that, it would be the ſame as exerting his Almighty power miraculouſly, to prove an unreaſonable revelation to be of his ſpecial inſtitution, to reaſonable beings; which is inadmiſſible. From hence we infer, that any revelation, doctrine or prepoſition whatever, which, in the principles or ſubject of them are falſe, can never be proved to be truth, or of divine authority, by evidence deduced from the hiſtory of miracles; but on the contrary, ſuch revelation or its doctrines diſprove the fact of the miracles, which are brought for their ſupport. And as the ſcriptures contain their own confutation, in the repugnancy of the fundamental doctrines thereof to reaſon, as has been argued before, it is in the higheſt degree unjuſt in argument to deduce evidence from (pretended) miracles, in ſupport of their divinity, at the ſame time, relying on uncertain, antiquated, intereſting and precarious hiſtory, for the evidence of the fact of the miracles; an evidence of all others the weakeſt, and moſt liable to deception; when on the other hand, the evidence againſt the divine authority of revelation, ariſing from its own inconſiſtencies (of which this generation muſt judge for itſelf) is as ſtrong as reaſon can poſſibly conceive of, or the truth and fitneſs of things, as reſulting from God, can make it to be; and in a ſuperlative ſenſe overturns the evidence for the fact of the miracles which could not have been wrought to prove contradictions; and, as the ſtronger evidence ſhould controul the weaker, we reject the hiſtory of miracles, for that we can be rationally certain that the miracles, which are ſaid to have been done by Moſes and the prophets, and by Chriſt and his Apoſtles, in teſtimony of their revelation, were not in fact true; ſince the fundamental doctrines which they have promulgated to the world are not reaſonable.

It is not my deſign to examine particularly into the hiſtory of Miracles, which would ſwell a volume, ſhall therefore obſerve that an hiſtorical repreſentation of facts, which are ſaid to have taken place in remote periods or parts of the world, are neither true nor falſe merely in conſequence of an hiſtorical exiſtence. Nor is it in our power to detect any miſrepreſentation of matters of fact, recorded in ancient hiſtory, except they are improbable or impoſſible to be true; for ſuch events as probably, or poſſibley may have taken place, and which are handed down to us by hiſtory, or by tradition, as having taken place in remote epocha's of the world, whether they are true or falſe, we cannot at this time determine, inaſmuch as that which is probable or poſſible, might have taken place for any thing we can know about it. But ſuch hiſtorical repreſentations of matters of fact as are inconſiſtent in themſelves, or with the reaſon and fitneſs of things, we are authorized from reaſon to detect as fallacious or ſpurious. For inſtance, an hiſtorical teſtimony that two and three was four could not be true; as thoſe numbers added together, make five: Nor could ſuch a teſtimony make virtue red, white, or any other colour; or juſtice to conſiſt of mere ſolidity, figure, motion or extenſion, or make a body occupy two diſtinct parts of ſpace, at one and the ſame inſtant of time. Furthermore, an hiſtorical teſtimony that Adam's ſin is my ſin, or that of any of his ſuppoſed deſcendants, could not be in fact true; or that the merits or righteouſneſs of Chriſt is that of the elect; or in other words it is impoſſible that the doctrine of imputation ſhould be true, as argued in the 12th chapter. Nor is it poſſible that the doctrine of ſupernatural inſpiration or revelation, or of a myſterious revelation, or a mere ſpiritual intercourſe of inviſible and imperceptible beings with mankind, ſhould be in fact true, as argued in the 6th chapter. Nor is it poſſible that there ſhould ever have been any truth in miracles, as argued in the 7th chapter. Nor is it poſſible that prophecy could have amounted to any thing more than human art, or illuſion, as argued in the 8th chapter. Nor is it poſſible that faith could be the condition of Salvation, as argued in the 9th chapter. Nor is poſſible that the doctrine of the trinity ſhould have been in fact true, as argued in the 10th chapter. Nor is it poſſible that all the human ſpecie deſcended, by ordinary generation, from the ſame original progenitors, as argued in the 11th chapterf Nor could a written or printed revelation have poſſibly been conſiſtent with a progreſſive ſtate of knowledge, or applicable to the various circumſtances of action and duty which concern mankind, who, after all, muſt have been neceſſitated to adopt the religion of nature or reaſon, as argued in the 2nd ſection of the 5th chapter; nor has it been poſſible that there ſhould have been a perfect compiling, or tranſlation of the ſcriptures, from the antient manuſcripts and dead languages, through all the refinements and viciſſitudes of learning, down to our time, as argued in chapter 13th. The doctrine here alluded to, and their appendages, compoſe the main ſyſtem of the chriſtian revelation, the rationality of which, may be better judged of in this enlightened age of the world, than in thoſe times of ignorance and ſuperſtition, in which it was promulgated. None will pretend, but that the learned nations of the earth at preſent, are far advanced, in arts, ſciences and logical reaſonings, above the primative Chriſtians: let us therefore examine, and candidly criticiſe for ourſelves, leſt the credulity of former ages obtrude their unphiloſophical and inconſiſtent revelations upon us, as ſacred and infallible truth. It is high time we were rouſed from our lethargy and ſuperſtition and that we demand of our ſpiritual teachers, reaſon and ſolid argument, for the ground of our faith and confidence.

SHOULD we admit that miracles were wrought to confirm the divine authority of primitive chriſtianity, and the miſſion of its firſt teachers, yet, thoſe miracles could not confirm the divinity of its preſent tranſlation, or the authority of its preſent teachers; for that the main ſyſtem of it, as it is now handed down to us, is, in its principles, repugnant to truth and the moral character of God, as argued in the chapters already alluded to. We infer from hence, that if miracles have been wrought in the early æra of the promulgation of the chriſtian revelation, to confirm its (then) authority, and that of its teachers, it has ſince that æra, by ſome means or other, became ſpuriouſly altered from its primitive ſuppoſed purity; and that thoſe premiſed miracles cannot evince the truth of the preſent copies of revelation, or the divine authority of the preſent clergy; for that the copies now extant, will not bear the ſcrutiny of reaſon. But if the preſent copies of the revelation are perfectly or eſſentially the ſame as they were in their primitive compoſure, we may be morally certain, that God never wrought miracles to perpetuate and confirm ſuch irrational doctrines as are therein contained, at the great expence of the treaſures and underſtandings of mankind.

SECTION II.

Morality, derived from Natural Fitneſs, and not from tradition.

SUCH parts or paſſages of the ſcriptures as inculcate morality, have a tendency to ſubſerve mankind, the ſame as all other public inveſtigations or teachings of it, may be ſuppoſed to have; but are neither better or worſe for having a place in the volumn of thoſe writings denominated canonical; for morality does not derive its nature from books, but from the fitneſs of things; and though it may be more or leſs, interſperſed through the pages of the Alkoran, its purity and rectitude would remain the ſame; for that it is founded in eternal right; and whatever writings, books or oral ſpeculations, beſt illuſtrate or teach this moral ſcience, ſhould have the preference. The knowledge of this as well as all other ſciences, is acquired from reaſon and experience, and (as it is progreſſively obtained) may with propriety be called, the revelation of God, which he has revealed to us in the conſtitution of our rational natures; and as it is congenial with reaſon and truth cannot

not (like other revelations) partake of impoſture. This is natural religion, and could be derived from none other but God. I have endeavoured, in this treatiſe, to prune this religion from thoſe excreſcences, with which Craft on the one hand, and Ignorance on the other, have loaded it; and to hold it up to view in its native ſimplicity, free from alloy; and have throughout the contents of the volume, addreſſed the reaſon of mankind, and not their paſſions, traditions or prejudices; for which cauſe, it is no wiſe probable that it will meet with any conſiderable approbation.

MOST of the human race, by one means or other are prepoſſeſſed with principles oppoſed to the religion of reaſon. In theſe parts of America, they are moſt generally taught, that they are born into the world in a ſtate of enmity to God and moral good, and are under his wrath and curſe, that the way to Heaven and future bleſſedneſs is out of their power to purſue, and that it is incumbred with myſteries which none but the Prieſts can unfold, that we muſt "*be born again*" have a ſpecial kind of faith, and be regenerated; or in fine, that human nature, which they call "the old man," muſt be deſtroyed, perverted, or changed by them, and by them new modeled, before it can be admitted into the Heavenly kingdom.

Such a plan of ſuperſtition, as far as it obtains credit in the world, ſubjects mankind to ſacerdotal empire; which is erected on the imbecility of human nature. Such of mankind, as break the fetters of their education, remove ſuch other obſtacles as are in their way, and have the confidence publicly to talk rational, exalt reaſon to its juſt ſupremacy, and vindicate truth and the ways of God's providence to men; are ſure to be ſtamped with the epithet of irreligious, infidel, prophane, and the like. But it is often obſerved of ſuch a man, that *he is morally honeſt*, and as often replied, *what of that? Morality will carry no man to heaven.* So that all the ſatisfaction the honeſt man can have while the ſuperſtitious are ſquibbing hell fire at him, is to retort back upon them that they are prieſt ridden.

Most people place religion in arbitrary ceremonies, or mere poſitive inſtitutions, abſtractly conſidered from the moral rectitude of things, and in which religion does not and cannot conſiſt, and thus delude themſelves with an empty notion of religion, which, in reality is made up of tradition and ſuperſtition, and in which moral obligation is not concerned; not conſidering that a conformity to moral rectitude, which is morality in the abſtract, is the ſum of all religion, that ever was or can be in the univerſe; as there can be no religion in that in which there is no moral obligation; except we make religion to be void of reaſon, and if ſo, all argument about it is at an end.

THE manner of the exiſtence, and intercourſe of human ſouls, after the diſſolution of their bodies by death, being inconceiveable to us in this life, and all manner of intelligence between us and departed ſouls impracticable, the prieſts have it in their power to amuſe us, with a great variety of viſionary apprehenſions of things in the world to come, which, while in this life, we cannot contradict from experience, the teſt of great part of our certainty (eſpecially to thoſe of ordinary underſtandings) and having introduced myſteries into their religion, make it as incomprehenſible to us, (in this natural ſtate) as the manner of our future exiſtence; and from ſcripture authority, having invalidated reaſon as being carnal and depraved, they proceed further to teach us from the ſame authority, that "*the natural man knoweth not the things of the ſpirit, for they are fooliſhneſs unto him, neither can he know them for they are ſpiritually diſcerned.*" A ſpiritualizing teacher is nearly as well acquainted with the kingdom of Heaven,as a man can be with his home lot. He knows the road to heaven and eternal bleſſedneſs, to which happy regions, with the greateſt aſſurance, he preſumes to pilot his dear diſciples, and unfold to them the miſteries of the canonical writings, and of the world to come ; they catch the enthuſiaſm and ſee with the ſame ſort of ſpiritual eyes, with which they can pierce religion through and through, and underſtand the ſpiritual meaning of the ſcriptures, which before had been " a dead letter" to them, particularly the revelations of St. John the Divine, and the alluſion of the horns therein mentioned. The moſt obſcure and unintelligible paſſages of the Bible, come within the compaſs of their ſpiritual diſcerning, as apparently as figures do to a mathematician : Then they can ſing ſongs out of the Canticles, ſaying, " I am my beloved's and my beloved is mine ;" and being at a looſe from the government of reaſon, pleaſe themſelves with any fanaticiſms they like beſt, as that of their being "*ſnatched as brands out of the burning, to enjoy the ſpecial and eternal favour of God, not from any worthineſs or merit in them, but merely from the ſovereign will and pleaſure of God, while millions of millions, as good by nature and practice as they, were left to welter eternally, under the ſcalding drops of divine vengeance* ;" not conſidering, that if it was conſiſtent with the peefections of God to ſave them, his ſalvation could not fail to have been uniformly extended to all others, whoſe circumſtances may be ſuppoſed to be ſimilar to, or more deſerving than theirs, for equal juſtice cannot fail to apply in all caſes in which equal juſtice demands it. But theſe deluded people reſolve the divine government altogether into ſovereignty; "*even ſo Father, for ſo it ſeemed good in thy ſight.*" And as they exclude reaſon and juſtice from their imaginary notions of religion, they alſo exclude it from the providence or moral government of God. Nothing is more common, in the part of the country where I was educated, than to hear thoſe infatuated people, in their public and private addreſſes, acknowledge to their creator, from the deſk and elſewhere, "*hadſt thou, O Lord, laid judgment to the line and righteouſneſs to the plummet, we had been in the grave with the dead and in hell with the damned, long before this time.*" Such expreſſions from the creature to the creator are prophane, and utterly incompatible with the divine character. Undoubtedly, (all things complexly conſidered) the providence of God to man is juſt, inaſmuch as it has the divine approbation.

THE ſuperſtitious thus ſet up a ſpiritual diſcerning, independent of, and in oppoſition to reaſon, and their mere imaginations paſs with each other, and with themſelves, for infallible truth. Hence it is, that they deſpiſe the progreſſive and weariſome reaſonings of philoſophers (which muſt be admitted to be a painful method of arriving at truth) but as it is the only way in which we can acquire it, I have purſued the old natural road of raciocination, concluding, that as this ſpiritual diſcerning is altogether inadequate to the management of any of the concerns of life, or of contributing any aſſiſtance or knowledge towards the perfecting of the arts and ſciences, it is equally unintelligible and inſignificant in matters of religion : and therefore conclude, that if the human race in general, could be prevailed upon to exerciſe common ſenſe in religious concerns, thoſe ſpiritual fictions would ceaſe, and be ſucceeded by reaſon and truth.

SECTION III.

Of the Importance of the Exerciſe of Reaſon, and Practice of Morality, in order to the Happineſs of Mankind.

THE period of life is very uncertain, and at the longeſt is but ſhort : a few years bring us from infancy to manhood, a few more to a diſſolution ; pain, ſickneſs and death are the neceſſary conſequences of animal life. Through life we ſtruggle with phyſical evils, which eventually are certain to deſtroy our earthly compoſition ; and well would it be for us did evils end here ; but alas ! moral evil has been more or leſs predominant in our agency, and though natural evil is unavoidable, yet moral evil may be prevented or remedied by the exerciſe of virtue. Morality is therefore of more importance to us than any or all other attainments; as it is a habit of mind, which, from a retroſpective conſciouſneſs of our agency in this life, we ſhould carry with us into our ſucceeding ſtate of exiſtence, as an acquired appendage of our rational nature, and as the neceſſary means of our mental happineſs. Virtue and vice are the only things in this world, which, with our ſouls, are capable of ſurviving death; the former is the rational and only procuring cauſe of all intellectual happineſs, and the latter of conſcious guilt and miſery; and therefore, our indiſpenſible duty and ultimate intereſt is, to love, cultivate and improve the one, as the means of our greateſt good, and to hate and abſtain from the other, as productive of our greateſt evil. And in order thereto, we ſhould ſo far diveſt ourſelves of the incumbrances of this world, (which are too apt to engroſs our attention) as to enquire a conſiſtent ſyſtem of the knowledge of religious duty, and make it our conſtant endeavour in life to act conformably to it. The knowledge of the being, perfections, creation and providence of GOD, and of the immortality of our ſouls, is the foundation of religion; which has been particularly illuſtrated in the four firſt chapters of this diſcourſe. And as the Pagan, Jewiſh, Chriſtian and Mahometan countries of the world have been overwhelmed with a multiplicity of revelations diverſe from each other, and which, by their reſpective promulgators, are ſaid to have been immediately inſpired into their ſouls, by the ſpirit of God, or immediately communicated to them by the intervening agency of angels (as in the inſtance of the inviſible Gabriel to Mahomet) and as thoſe revelations have been received and credited, by far the greater part of the inhabitants of the ſeveral countries of the world (on whom they have been obtruded) as ſupernaturally revealed by God or Angels, and which, in doctrine and diſcipline, are in moſt reſpects repugnant to each other, it fully evinces their impoſture, and authorizes us, without a lengthy courſe of arguing, to determine with certainty, that not more than one if any one of them, had their original from God; as they claſh with each other; which is ground of high probability againſt the authenticity of each of them.

A REVELATION, that may be ſuppoſed to be really of the inſtitution of God, muſt alſo be ſuppoſed to be perfectly conſiſtent or uniform, and to be able to ſtand the teſt of truth; therefore ſuch pretended revelations, as are tendered to us as the contrivance of heaven, which do not bear that teſt, we may be morally certain, was either originally a deception, or has ſince, by adulteration become ſpurious. Furthermore, ſhould we admit, that among the numerous revelations on which the reſpective prieſts have given the ſtamp of divinity, ſome one of them was in reality of divine authority, yet we could no otherwiſe, as rational beings, diſtinguiſh it from others, but by reaſon.

Reason therefore muſt be the ſtandard, by which we determine the reſpective claims of revelation; for otherwiſe we may as well ſubſcribe to the divinity of the one as of the other, or to the whole of them, or to none at all. So likewiſe on this theſis, if reaſon rejects the whole of thoſe revelations, we ought to return to the religion of nature and reaſon.

Undoubtedly it is our duty, and for our beſt good, that we occupy and improve the faculties, with which our Creator has endowed us, but ſo far as prejudice, or prepoſſeſſion of opinion prevails over our minds, in the ſame proportion, reaſon is excluded from our theory or practice. Therefore if we would acquire uſeful knowledge, we muſt firſt diveſt ourſelves of thoſe impediments; and ſincerely endeavour to ſearch out the truth; and draw our concluſions from reaſon and juſt argument, which will never conform to our inclination, intereſt or fancy; but we muſt conform to that if would judge rightly. As certain as we determine contrary to reaſon, we make a wrong concluſion; therefore, our wiſdom is, to conform to the nature and reaſon of things, as well in religious matters, as in other ſciences. Prepoſterouſly abſurd would it be, to negative the exerciſe of reaſon in religious concerns, and yet, be actuated by it in all other and leſs occurrences of life. All our knowledge of things is derived from God, in and by the order of nature, out of which we cannot perceive, reflect or underſtand any thing whatſoever; our external ſenſes are natural and ſo are our ſouls; by the inſtrumentality of the former we perceive the objects of ſenſe, and with the latter we reflect on them. And thoſe objects are alſo natural; ſo that ourſelves, and all things about us, and our knowledge collected therefrom, is natural, and not ſupernatural; as argued in the 6th chapter.

We may and often do, connect or arrange our ideas together, in a wrong or improper manner, for the want of ſkill or judgment, or through miſtake or the want of application, or through the influence of prejudice; but in all ſuch caſes, the error does not originate from the ideas themſelves, but from the compoſer; for a ſyſtem, or an arrangement of ideas juſtly compoſed; always contain the truth; but an unjuſt compoſition never fails to contain error and falſhood. Therefore an unjuſt connection of ideas is not derived from nature, but from the imperfect compoſition of man. Miſconnection of ideas is the ſame as misjudging, and has no poſitive exiſtence, being merely a creature of the imagination; but nature and truth are real and uniform; and the rational mind by reaſoning, diſcerns the uniformity, and is thereby enabled to make a juſt compoſition of ideas, which will ſtand the teſt of truth. But the fantaſtical illuminations of the credulous and ſuperſtitious part of mankind, proceed from weakneſs, and as far as they take place in the world, ſubvert the religion of REASON and TRUTH.

FINIS.

THE APPENDIX

to

REASON

AN ESSAY ON THE UNIVERSAL PLENITUDE OF BEING AND ON THE NATURE AND IMMORTALITY OF THE HUMAN SOUL AND ITS AGENCY.

By Ethan Allen, Esqr.

Proposed as an appendix, to a system of moral philosophy, lately published at Bennington, entitled oracles of Reason.

To which is subjoined, a letter to Doctor Benj'in Gale in answer to one of his, on the subject of eternal Creation.[1]

INTRODUCTION

The Volum to which this is an appendix, was written and printed, previous to the composing this addition, in which I have altered my opinion, of the essence of the soul. In page 94 of the said volumn I considered the soul, as not capable of possessing or occupying space, in which opinion, (with many others) for the reasons hereafter exhibited, I conclude that I was mistaken. The soul, with entity in general, must needs occupy space in some sense or other. Though the soul is intrinsically different from sensless matter, (which, in the course of the arguments, will be evinced) yet (with other intelligent entity) it must have a place, in order to have an existence; and if a place, it must have substance,

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[1] Of Ethan Allen's manuscript the editor of the *Historical Magazine* writes as follows in his foreword to the "Appendix": "It is a manuscript, evidently in the handwriting of its author, divided into an *Introduction* and four distinct *Sections*, extending over eighty pages of foolscap; but a promised letter to Doctor Benjamin Gale . . . if it was ever attached to the paper—which is doubtful—has disappeared."

(however mysterious to us) which is by nature capable of possessing place; since admitting the existence of the soul (of which we have an intuitive consciousness) it must exist some where, which is the same as to exist in some place, for an existence no where, is a contradiction to existence it self.

We must therefore asscribe substance to the nature of the soul, a property by which only it is capable of place, or whereness, and consequently of existence; for otherwise, we only amuse our selves with the empty notions of nonentity for the soul, which is the same as for an intelligent conscious being, in actual possession of place and existence, to imagine that he is nothing; which, if true, we query how he ever came to imagine any thing about entity or nonentity, or to have exercised any reflection or consciousness at all; since nothing, or the mere absence of being, could not have done it. I suppose that writers and speakers have confounded themselves more or less, in their arguments on this subject, by denominating the soul to be either material or immaterial, and by examining the properties of incogitative and stupid matter, which is capable of division, figure and motion, with the effects and combinations, which, to our senses and conceptions, appear to be in those kinds of beings; and finding that there is none of the properties or affections that are natural to an intelligent soul, except the property of possessing place, which is common to sensless as well as to moral beings, we are apt to run into the absurd conclusion that the soul is no substance, having in the first place began our querie whether the soul be material or immaterial, and finding that it is not material, in the sense we have before observed, we incautiously conclude it to be immaterial;

and in our diffinition of immaterial, we preclude the Idea of substance from the soul, and consequently are divided into the material and immaterial systems; not considering that there may be, and undoubtedly are, intelligent substances, specifically and intrincally distinct from matter, and though they are by nature immaterial, are nevertheless substantial beings, and have a capacity of whereness or of possessing place. But this notion of spiritual substances of which the essence of inte[*ligent**] beings exist, having altogether or too much been neglected, and [*the*] contrary doctrine that mere matter composes all substances, having been advanc[*ed by*] the Materialests, who argued Justly from their system, [*that*] Immaterial substances or souls coul have no existence, as the [*Imma*]terial system excluded them from being. And the Imma[*terial*]ests (of whom I was till lately one,) by denying the Mater[*ial sys*] tem, in order to make way for the Intelligent existence [*of the*] soul, advanced the doctrine of its Immateriality, and ra[*n into*] the egregious blunder of denying the soul the property of [*possessing*] substance at all; and consequently the property of possess[*ing*] place, which militates conclusively against its existen[*ce in*] therory; though not in practice and fact, (and it is a ma[*xim*] in law that facts are stubborn things,) and since in fact [*we*] have an Intelligent existence, we are obliged as philosop[*hers*] to ascribe such properties to that part of our nature, as [*are*] manifestly consistent therewith, and Essential to it, and deny to it, such [*as are*] incompatible to its being: and since in fact, if the soul ex[*ists*] any where, it exists in some place, and if so, it must ha[*ve the*] property of substance wherewith to occupy the same, [*as it*] is manifestly chimerical to ascribe the notion of place, * * * to it.

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*The edges of this portion of the manuscript have disappeared; and we have placed in brackets what we suppose, from the fragments and the context, the author originally wrote thereon.—*Editor.*

Those who adhere to the immaterial system, except they premise a real substance, specifically and intrinsically different from mere matter, of which the soul exists, do by consequence (though not designedly) preclude the existence of the soul; since place is necessary to existence, and substance is essential to possess or occupy place. And on the other hand, those who maintain the material system, by necessary consequence preclude intelligence from the soul, for that matter is incogitative and passive. And thus both systems seem to militate against the existence of the soul, the former, by not including in their Idea of the soul any kind of substance, whereby it could exist, and the latter, by ascribing to it no other substance but matter only, which by nature is incapable of reflection and consciousness, and thereby negative the intelligence of the soul. These with other considerations exhibited in the following discourse, induced me to premise that the soul existed of a specific kind of spiritual substance, which, however imperceptible through the medium of sense, is nevertheless a real substance, since the soul, in this life, has an actual existence in and possession of the body: we will therefore indeavour to investigate its essence as far as it may be in our power.

What has been hinted at in the introduction may serve to prepare the mind of the reader for the reception of the following arguments on this subject.

CHAPTER I

SECTION I

Of the essence of the soul, and of cogitative and incogitative entity in general.

It may be matter of doubt whether the wisdom of man, in this weak condition of being and action, is able to elucidate so intricate a subject as that of the essence of the soul; but as human science and knowledge is progressive, we can not determine to what attainments it may or may not arrive. A candid examination therefore into any part of nature, cannot be disservisable to us. If we make any new discoveries, we are wiser than we were before; and if we do not succeed in the investigation of the nature of the soul, or of universal entity, we shall have done the most that we could do to discover the truth, and shall have the satisfaction of reflecting that had we not been thus inquisitive we should not have improved so far in knowledge as to have known but that we might have gone farther: we will therefore proceed with our enquiry into the essence of the soul.

The question, as we shall manage it, will not be whether the soul be material or immaterial, but whether the soul is a real substance or not. common sense assures us that those parts of entity that come within our observation, which we call matter, does not think, but is by nature incapable of reflection and consciousness; and since the soul is by nature capable of these intelligent exertions, we may with certainty infer that the soul is not material; and if not material why not immaterial. In a strict sense it may be immaterial, or void of matter, but not in such a sense as to exempt it from substance; since, without substance, it would be incapable of possessing or Occupying place; which, if true, it could not possess or Occupy the Body, which we know to be in fact true.

That there is a union between soul and body, is a fact that none that have souls and bodies will dispute; but that an animal body should be united with a soul or spirit of no substance, is contradictory and impossible. It is the same as to join or unite nothing with something, which is manifestly absurd. But it may be premised, that the soul, though void of substance, is nevertheless intelligent, but such a querie as this would be beging the question,.for that intelligence implies being as much as anything else. None will dispute but that the soul is intelligent, but the dispute is whether it is a real substance or not. The point to be proved on the part of my opponents, if I shall have any, is, that the soul may exert it self intelligently, or consciously, without substance, or that an intelligent being may be, and that its essence may be void of substance, which appears to me to be the same as to suppose that nonentity may exert or do acts of intelligence and consciousness; for there can be no attribute, property, or quality, to a premised being or soul, void of substance; any more than to nonentity. for instance we will examine into the manner of the existence of such a premised being. Is it local or boundless; has it a whereness or ubiquity: admitting it to be local, it must of necessary consequence have a circumpherence, and a circumpherence necessarily implies a real extention, and extention a substance, however inconceivable to us, (by reason of its subtile purity,) to occupy the contents of that extention, as nonentity could not do it. And on the contrary to ascribe ubiquity or omnipresence to it, would be a contradiction to its finitude or locality, as none but the infinite mind can be omnipresent, (of which more will be observed in its order.) From hence we infer that an intelligent finite being, perfectly exempted from all manner or kind of substance, can be neither bounded or unbounded and therefore could have no real existence, since there can be no being that has a positive existence but must come within one or the other of the descriptions of bounded or unbounded existence, (the latter of which is only aplicable to God,) for there can be no third description of existence in the universe, that does not belong to the character of Either bounded or unbounded, limited or unlimited; and since the soul has a conscious knoledge of a finite existence, we infer, that its essence must exist of some real substance though it be ever so etherial, electrical, subtile, vivid and pure, or of what ever quality, property, or attribute we ascribe to it, and however imperceptible to our external senses, and incomprehensible to our understandings.

Though we are conscious of the existence and exercise of reflection, memory, contrivance, judgment and volition, with other exertions of the soul, which manifest its entity and agency, yet this our consciousness, does not make known to us the question now before us, whether the soul is a substance or not, nor is it in nature possible for our bodily senses, to have any perception of a soul, or mere spirit, whether that of our own or of others, therefore the question under consideration, concerning the substance of the soul, must be investigated by reason, if at all, since it is not from our mediate or natural sensations of things, nor from our immediate consciousness of the entity of our own souls, or of others, or from our agency and complicated modes of intelligent action, that we shall be able to investigate the intrinsic nature of the soul, for if we had senses nice enough to perceive the soul, or spiritual beings, they would with external objects in general, come within the knowledge of our perceptions, and thereby we should have been able to have conceived of their existence, as of external things, which would have rendered our present logical speculations unnecessary, or if our consciousness of a spiritual existence extended to the manner of its being we might thereby have understood whether the soul is a substantial, or an unsubstantial being or not, but since our senses perceive nothing of the soul, or of such kind of beings, and as our consciousness of such existence, does not extend to the manner of their existence, so far as to inform us relative to the substance of the soul, we must investigate the subject (,if possible,) by reason.

Our senses discover to us that we have an organized Body, with its figure, size, and proportion, and we are conscious of intelligent being and agency, within the circumpherence of the body, and by experience know that (according to the Law of nature,) we can move and actuate ourselves at pleasure; yet we do not understand the intrinsic cause, or spring of motion in our bodies; so as to explain the manner of it, or to solve all questions concerning it; so that it remains a mystery to us how, from a mere volition of mind, our hands and feet obey us; for we cannot conceive of the manner of the operation of our spirits, or our Organized sensitive Bodies, yet since we know it to be a fact, we cannot but conclude, that the soul or active being in our compound nature has a real substance, since it produces real motion in us, and since nonentity coul not do it, any more than it could be capable of Existence. From hence we infer, that there is a pure cogitative substance in the nature of man, that performs those astonishing actions, of mind and body, which in its nature is not material and which we call by the name of Soul, mind Spirit &cc. Thus, as all finite cogitative beings must have a place, if they have a real existence, and must be local, and have certain dimentions, and consist of some mysterious substance, to render them capable of occupying place (,which to us seems to be absolutely essential, in order to have an existence) as a real existence must be somewhere if at all, since an existence no where is a manifest contradiction.

Furthermore, the essence of the soul, having been considered as a pure vivid substance, rids us of the before argued absurdity, of a union of a soul of no substance, to an animal and material body, which in its consequences is the same, as to unite nothing to some thing, and though this is impossible, it is not impossible to unite, a vivid, pure, cogitative substance, to a body of incogitative matter: such a union of different sorts of substances, one cogitative, and the other material, implies no contradiction, and at the same time constitutes the property of place to the soul, without which its entity could not be conceived of. That the soul resides in the body in this life we have an intuitive certainty, we therefore infer, that as it occupies space in this manner of being it must do the same in all and every circumstance and progression of its existence, whether we can perceive or understand the manner of its occupying space or not. If a human soul is premised to be in China it could not be in America at the same time, and if it has not a Capacity of possessing place, but is void of whereness, it could not be in China or in America or any where else, which according to our notion of things would preclude it from a real existence.

Furthermore, a premised soul that is by Nature incapable of possessing a place, would also be incapable of motion. It could not move from one Country or place to another, for motion implies real entity of something that is capable of possessing a certain local part of space, which constitutes the being or thing that moves, for nonentity is as incapable of motion as of existence.

When I think of China my soul is not in that Country but in my body, an historical knowledge of China has been communicated to my mind, which retains a remembrence of it, by the recollection whereof I am enabled to reflect thereon at pleasure, but neither my soul or body was ever in the Country of China, nor is it yet four hundred years since the learned european part of the World, has known that there was such an antient and populous Nation in the World. The Portugues who first sailed round the cape of good hope, made the first discovery of that great and powerful nation. From this and such like experimental discoveries we infer, that human souls do not rove about at random from their bodies, from place to place, or from Country to Country, for if they did the western part of the World, would have made a discovery of China, previous to the Portugues sailing (with their bodies and souls) round the Cape of good-hope, and exploring the Country. Furthermore, all circumnavigators and travellers have explored the several parts of the World by the united exertions of their souls and bodies; and since the soul is possessed of existence in this life, and does not seperate, rove, or move from the body till Death, we infer, that it resides there till that period, is by nature a real substance and is propagated by natural generation with the body; as the apparent simularity of the genius of Children to their parents and near relations may witness, and though an animal body is necessary in Order to its propagation and continuance in this life, or mode of being, yet it is not essential to be continued with the soul during its existence, for if so, the soul could not survive the body, which will be farther considered in its proper place. Was it not that the soul was of some mysterious substance or other (to us,) it could not have been propagated with, and united to the body, or seperated from it at Death. To be seperated from the body or leave it, seems to us the same as to move from the wreck of the body, which without a real substance it could not do. And though the substance of the soul and its motion from the body at Death, to the region or place of its destined retribution, is to the survivers in life imperceptible, yet as the same soul occupied the body in life in an imperceptible manner as before argued, it must occupy space in its premised passage to its place of retribution, and at that place, and in all places of its existence it must Occupy space.

From hence we infer, that had not the soul been resident in the body in this life, it could not have been seperated from it at death; and had it not been by nature a real substance, it would have been incapable of either a union with, or seperation from the body; or a survival of it, however imperceptible and mysterious intellectual beings are to us in this frail condition of being.

When we indeavour to give a definition of a spiritual being, by placing certain adjectives, to wit, subtile, etherial, electrical, vivid, pure and the like, before the word substance which is a substantive; we do not suppose that they give a true and perfect discription of the essence of the soul, or of cogitative being in general; such a knowledge is undoubtedly beyond our perception, yet such like definitions may serve to shew negatively, that we do not mean to express in our Idea of the substance of the soul, that elementary fluxility of matter, which we denominate to be stupid or sensless. For though we cannot form a Just Idea of the nature of moral beings, yet we may and ought to preclude in our Idea of them, that kind of sensless matter which we ascribe to incogitative beings.

Having thus excluded matter from the Essence of the soul, which we are intuitively certain is a thinking being, we still proceed to query what is thought. It is the act of the soul. And what is the soul. Here our knowledge in great measure fails us for though our consciousness extends to the thoughts, (which are the exercises) of the soul; it des not extend to its essence; yet those actions of the soul of which we are conscious demonstrate the existence of the soul, since without an existence it could not act or display a rational nature. It may be premised that thought or reflection is the soul itself, or that its essence consists in thinking. Admitting this definition of the essence of the soul, and it affords no manner of solution to the question of the substance of the soul, for the same question will recur, whether there is any substance in thought or not. To say that the essence of the soul consist merely in thought, without determining whether thought is a substance or not, is saying nothing to the point at issue concerning the Essence of the soul.

Admitting the position that mere thought constitutes the essence of the soul, it alters not the force of the preceeding arguments; for if we call the soul by the name of thought, we must admit its entity and union with the body, and disunion from it at Death, and passage or motion from the corps to its place of retribution, in these and all other circumstances of being and action, thought or the soul, must occupy space as before argued. So that calling the soul by the name of thought, or by any other name, alters not the Arguments concerning the essence of the soul; or afford any solution to the subject matter of our inquiry. Finally though we can have no Just perception or comprehension of the essence of of the soul; or of spiritual beings, yet we may understand from logical reasonings that they must be of some specific substance mysterious to us, so as to constitute their entity, and render them capable of possessing place. To suppose that any species of entity has no place, is a contradiction to the doctrine of entity it self, for that if it be in no place it would be no where, and if no where, it could not be entity but nonentity. From the foregoing conclusion we infer, that we are able to reason farther on this subject than our external senses can extend, as we have demonstrated that intelligent beings must exist or consist, of some specific substance, though our senses are utter strangers to it, and though our reflections and consciousness can not comprize its intrinsic essence.

Undoubtedly it was for wise and good purposes, and to ultimately promote our happiness (all things considered), that our Creator has in this life, restricted our perception of extérnal Objects by the laws of our organized senses, and the knowledge of our own intelligent nature, by our immediate consciousness of it, and thereby concealed from us the understanding of the essence of a pure spirtual substance or being. Our senses are incompetent to give us any perception of such a being, and therefore our reflections predicated thereon cannot comprize it, nor does our immediate consciousness of our own rational nature, contain in it; a compleat Idea of its essence, so that we are thereby able to fully comprehend it. The notions that we have of intelligent entity, we derive not only from the consciousness that we have of it in our selves, but from the inferences of it in others which we perceive by the external signs of it in them.

Furthermore, our neighbours and others of our species with whom we are sociable, by language inform us, that they are also rational beings, the reality of which is fully evinced to us by their intelligent conversation as well as by writing, and other external behaviour, but we are not conscious of each others consciousness, yet we can not be mistaken in the conclusion that we and they are rational beings. The knowledge therefore that we have of our own intelligent nature, is from our respective immediate consciousness of it; but the knowledge that we have of this specific kind of entity in Others, we mediately derive from the intelligent communication which we have with them. And as to our evidence of the Divine intelligence, we deduce it from that of our own, for we can not but know that God is an intelligent being, because he has made *us* so, and his power wisdom and goodness is displayed *to us* in the Creation, regulation and support of the Universe, or of such parts of it, as comes within our notice and Observation. Thus it is from our own rational nature, and from external things in general that we deduce the knowledge of the being of a God and of his perfections.

This is a concise summary of the most direct and certain evidence, that we have of intelligent entity. Furthermore, we have a rational evidence of the existence of inconceivably numerous Orders of finite intelligent beings intersperced through the universe; but the evidence of the existence of those Orders of beings is deduced from a more extensive circle of argumentation, and though morally certain, and sufficiently apparent to such minds as are improved in science, and have extended the amplitude of their speculations beyond this World, yet it does not urge itself upon the common understanding of mankind, nor even on the most enlightened, with that ample degree of certainty, that we have observed of our own intelligent entity, or that of the Divine nature.

When we contemplate on the orbs of the solar system, and others in the expanse of heaven that are visible merely to the eye, and on others still more remote, which are discovered by the instrumentality of tellescopes, and also contemplate on the

Eternity and Infinity of God, we are naturally apt to conclude that the Author of that stupendious part of Creation that falls under our Observation, has extended his Creation co-extensive with the Infinity of his nature and absolute perfection; and consequently that there is no limitation to it, but that those Worlds of motion or rest throughout the universe; are every of them possessed by intelligent agents. since there could have been no object for the display of Divine wisdom and goodness, in an immense Creation of mere sensless beings, void of intelligence and incapable of enjoyment.

Furthermore if we reason from the analogy of God's providence, in replenishing this globe with rational agents, it would follow, that he has uniformly displayed his providence and goodness throughout his unlimited Creation.

It is too romantic a notion to premise, that God has Created Worlds to our conception innumerable, placed or moving in harmonious order and perfect natural decorum, abstractedly considered from intelligent beings, to whom only they could be servisable. It could not have been a matter of mere curiocity in God, to have made an essay of skill in the Creation and harmonizing a sensless universe, such exertions were not necessary for the improvement of infinite perfection since it could receive no enlarement: for that very reason that it was infinite: And as such a creation and harmony of mere natural things, destitute of sensibility and incapable of enjoyment, could not be profitable or instructive to God, it could not be advantageous to it self, or display any wisdom goodness or providence in God, for want of a capacity of reflection and consciousness, we may therefore with a well grounded judgment determine, that a mere stupid creation has never taken place: And since creation has a being, we may infer, that intelligent creatures have been intersperced co-eval and co-extensive with it.

Thus far we reason on the plenitude of finite intelligent agents, from principles of almost the highest moral certainty, but when we reflect on the temperatures of those Worlds, situated, or moving in the boundless expanse of heaven, and on the amazing diversity that is possible to subsist between the specific Orders of intelligent beings who Inhabit them, their various modes of existence (inconceivable to us,) with their diverse organization and interchangable methods of sociability, we are lost in conjecture and admiration, and readily perceive that our faculties of sensation and reflection, are very inadiquate to conceive of the specific and intrinsic difference that there is, or may be, in the universal entity of either natural or moral beings.

We mortals who by nature have but five senses, know not but that there may be in the eternal and infinite creation and providence of God, a greater diversity of sorts of senses, and consequently of sensations of different objects, than we are able to innumerate, by which the specific, or distinct Orders of intelligent agents in the universe, may obtain the Idea of equally numerous and distinct kinds of entity, of which we with our five senses can make no discovery, any more than a man born blind could of colours. The short of the matter is this, all finite beings are limitted, we have five senses, and the other numerous Orders of finite rational beings before aluded to, may have to us, an inconceivable diversity of distinct senses, some may have ten in stead of five senses, or any o her number to which we are utter strangers. From hence we infer, that it would be great weakness in us to conclude; that in this weak condition of being, we can perceive or comprehend the specific kinds of entity in general, as well may the blind and deaf conclude that they can do it. We may nevertheless have a rational assurance, that there can be no species or manner of entity whatever, but what Possesses, or exists of some sort of real substance as before argued, for if we do not admit this position, we only substitute in its room castles in the air, and conceit that our soles and most other beings are mere nothing.

The arguments advanced by some philosophers, of the infinite divisibility of an attom of (what they call solid) matter, may serve to illusterate the invisibility of the soul, since mere matter may be divided so small, as to be imperceptible to our senses, and yet have a real existence. I am not of Opinion that such an attom is capable of an infinite division or subdivision of parts, for if so, the constituant parts of the attom merely by the divisions of its parts, would fill immensity with its premised infinity of parts, yet if we premise that the divisions and subdivisions of it, be continued as far as in nature it is possible, or as far as Omnipotant perfection could seperate or divide it, and then premise that all its parts be brought together again and congealed as before, and it would constitute the same attom, in stead of filling immensity with its contents, for though mere division of matter cannot annihilate it, if the operation be carried on as far as possible, nor divest it of its entity so on the other hand mere division could not add to its quantity or kind of entity, for the dividing of matter cannot add to, or diminish from its respective quantity, bulk or sort of entity. The gross matter of the universe which by nature is capable of division or seperation of its particles, could not and does not more than fill the universe, (nor is it probable that it composes any very considerable part of it,) how then could the divided parts of an attom do it. From hence we infer, that an attom of matter is not infinitely divisible.

The solution of the dispute concerning the divisibility of matter, does not in its event respect the subject of the present enquiry, any more than other systems of philosophy. The imperceptible divisions that are possible to an attom of incogitative matter, may however serve to illusterate our position of the imperceptible substance of the essence of the soul: not that incogitative matter could (by omnipotence it self,) be made capable of thought, reflection or consciousness, merely by division, or by all and every method of composition, modification or constitution; since in all its parts, it is by nature destitute of intelligence or consciousness, which could not be imparted to it merely by the art of modifying or composition of its parts, for omnipotence cannot make that being to be rational, which by nature is not so. Composition or constitution. might vary an incogitative and organized being all possible ways, but could not make an addition of any power faculty or nature, which the componant parts of the machine was by nature destitute of, or superadd intelligence to that thing, which complexly considered was intrinsically void of it, since modification or composition is the work of formation, but not of creation, and cannot extend to any thing more that mere formation. Yet as the subtile ether and some other substances of mere matter, are not pereptible to our senses, (of which we shall observe in its order,) and yet have a real existence, we may therefore infer, that an intelligent being, who is by nature conscious of existence, must exist of such substance as we cannot perceive by the senses; and which is specifically distinct from matter.

Our Organized senses are not so accute in the discovery of external objects, as (without experiments) we are apt to imagine. Let us observe the rays of light shining into a House through a breach or window, and in the limit of their direction we may discover | a countless number of | attoms or particles of matter, which out of the limit of the sunshine (in the room), could not be perceived by the eye, Furthermore, human invention in constructing microscopes, tellescopes and other kinds of glasses discover to us, a numerous succession of mites and attoms in the airy region, which without the help of glasses escape the notice of the eye, and opens to our view an astonishing variety of Worlds in the expanse of heaven, which the unassisted eye could not have discovered. But when we reflect within the limit of our own atmosphere, what a wonderfull succession of creatures, really possessed of animal life are brought into view, merely by the use of those artificial instruments. How surprisingly small to our gross conception of little, (which we compute merely by the eye,) are those animals; whose existence to our coarse senses are made perceptible by the feeble efforts of human art, and how much smaller still must be the componant parts of those animals, whose circumpherence escapes the natural perception of human sight, and yet occupy such a considerable part of space, as to have a competency of room, to exert all the functions of an animal body. Furthermore, the globules of blood which impart to these (glass conceptioned) animals vital heat and strength, must every of them be compounded of an inconceivable number of still smaller particles of blood, which are still compounded of others, and so on we know not how far in the imperceptible degrees of small.

Abstracted from curious experiments and logical reasonings we are apt to think, that the natural perception of our external senses, represent to our minds a Just Idea of great and small, and therefore substitute them as the criterion, or standard of the degrees of the size of external objects, and of strength and weakness, solidity and subtileness, but when we examine into our own notions of great and small, strength and weakness, solidity and subtileness, we find them to be merely comparitive. A Whale we apprehend to be great, and a Cat we apprehend to be small, yet a Cat is large compared with a Mouse, and the Whale appears to be small compared with a Mountain, and the Mouse large compared to an attom, and the Mountain small compared with the World, and the World nearly lost compared with immensity.

The extreams of great and small are not perceptible to our senses, nor comprehensible to our understanding, hence we infer, that we have no standard wherby to ascertain the true Idea of great or small, and as our senses and Ideas are inadiquate to form a Just conception of great and small, they are likewise inadiquate to form a Just Idea of the substance, or Essence of the soul, or of mere spiritual beings.

Nevertheless it is demonstrable that they must exist of some specific substance, or not be at all, since nonentity could not give being either to the soul, or to the extream of small, as there can be no reality or size of either great or small, to the absence of all kind of being. Therefore whatever specific or intrinsic difference there may be between incogitative and cogitative beings, yet in both kind of natures and existences, there must be something, which is the same as substance, which must constitute all entity; or nonentity must have excluded entity, which if true would have prevented all disputes about it.

Our notions of Strength and weakness, solidity and subtileness are also comparitive and imperfect.

The Wolf we apprehend to be strong, and the sheep to be weak, but the sheep is strong compared with a snale, and the Wolf weak compared with a Lyon. Furthermore strength seems to terminate in power and Wisdom, and implies an ability to perform something great and wonderful, and weakness the contrary. What Power and Wisdom is displayed to our finite understanding, in the periodical revolutions of the Orbs of our solar system! but when we reflect on the Creation and harmony of the universe in general, we are lost in wonder and amazement, and are unable to form a Just Idea of that strength or power which is infinite.

With respect to solidity and subtileness, our Ideas are also comparative: nor are we possessed of any criterian or standard whereby to ascertain what is absolutely solid or subtile. Every of the specific sorts of Wood we denominate to be solid, though some sorts are more solid than others. Mallable bodies of various densities are also denominated solid, though it is manifest that some of them are more solid than others, but these are comparative Ideas and do not give us an Idea of solidity in the abstract, nor do we know that there is any such thing in nature. Hard and ponderous bodies which to us appear to be smooth and on which we bestow the term and attribute of solid, will appear to be rough, uneven and full of coarse pores when inspected through the medium of certain glasses, and the ladies who appear exquisitly beautiful to the eye, will have their defects when surveyed through such mediums.

The notions that have commonly been received of entity, is that which is generally apprehended of solidity. solidity is thought to exclud a vacuum, and consequently to constitute entity, but if the doctrine of solidity is closely attended to, we shall find as we have before observed, that we have no conception of it, nor of any premised entity which may have been predicated thereon. Such specific sort of things as we can have a conception of through the medium of our senses, we are certain has an existence, but for us to found our notions of entity on the vulgar apprehensions of solidity, of which our senses and Ideas are incompitant to understand, or form any Just conceptions, is to amuse ourselves with visionary apprehensions of things, that have no other existence (as we know of) but in our fertile imagination.

We must conceive of things as they are in nature, or else we deceive our selves. Nature will not conform to our notions, traditions, parties or prejudices. but we must in our conceptions and Judgment of things conform to nature, which is the standard of truth and reality. We know but little of things, yet with candour, application, and a sincere desire after truth, we may improve our understandings in the knowledge of nature; much farther than at our commensing studients we could have Imagined. Undoubtedly in a bar of Iron there are vacuums not replete with Iron, but a vacuum of nonentity is impossible to be. The particles of ponderous mallable matter or substances, which to our senses appear to be closely conjealed, which we call solid, are through the medium of glasses found to be full of pores and the vacuums in Iron or in other such like substances, between the particles, form little valleys, while the gross particles swell comparitively into little hills. These concavities or vacuums in conjealed bodies, do not constitute nonentity, for if there was nothing between the respective particles, they would touch each other and become solid, and could not be crouded any closer together by the application of a hammer to it, for if a bar of Iron was perfectly solid, (though we cannot conceive of it to be really so,) it could not admit of a vacuum for, perfect solidity would excludes it. We may premise a real solidity, and abstractedly reason on such a thisis, though at the same time it is to us uncertain or improbable, that there should be any such thing in the Universe. And since by Human art, (which is very far from discovering the internal essence of things), we perceive by our senses the rough uneven surface of the hardest and most conjealed substances that we are acquainted with; and as the vacuums therein discovered or premised to be, can contain nothing, consequently they contain something, whatever it is, or however out of the dicovery of our senses. We are apt to confound our notion of entity, when speculating of a premised Surface of Iron, or other ponderous substances, by concluding that the vacuums in Iron, are by consequence vacuums in entity, which is not so. It is true there are vacuums in Iron entity, but not of all kinds of entity, for nonentity is the absence of entity, which negative of being could not keep any bodies or parts of bodies apart, but as we have before observed, all dense bodies would necessarily touch, so as to constitute a perfect solidity of all its parts, since mere nothing could not seperate them or keep them apart. But it may be said that there is more entity in a piece of Iron, than in a piece of wood of the same dimentions, as the Iron will out-Weigh the wood. but when we nicely consider these specific kinds of substances, we shall find as we have before observed, that the whole contents of the piece of Iron does not consist of Iron only, as there are vacuums in it of other entity besides that of Iron; the same may be observed in wooden entity, that the piece before aluded to, does not consist merely of wood, since there are larger vacuums in it than in the piece of Iron of equal dimentions, and consequently pertakes more of other invisible specific entity than the piece of Iron, as the vacuums in wood are larger than those of the Iron, hence we infer, that the known and unknown specific sorts of entity, or being are so intermixed or intersperced together; that they cannot be by us comprehended seperately or distinctly. It is true that according to our common notion of weight, the piece of Iron will outweigh the piece of wood and admitting that some specific sorts of entity that are perceptible to our senses, are heavier than others of the same bulk or dimentions, yet it would not follow *from hence*. that there would be more entity in the piece of Iron than in the piece of wood for mere weight can have no reference to entity in general. Some sorts of beings wholly escape the perception of our senses, which through the medium of glasses become visible, and yet are incapable of weigh or measure by our kind of schales or measures, nor is it at all improbable that there should be, millions of specific or distinct sorts of real entity, (of the imcogitative nature) that not only are imperceptible to our senses, but to our senses assisted by instruments of human art, which we may readily perceive to be inadiquate sorts of beings to Operate on the beam of a steelyard or scales, as well as intelligent entity in general. We may as well measure a triangle by sound, as to weigh every of the specific sorts of being in the universe, though some sorts of beings are by nature capable of weight and measure. There are a great variety of articles of barter and sale, which by nature are capable of being calculated and estimated by the pound, as in the instance of Lead or Silver, but as has been observed before, the space that is possessed by these and such like bodies; to the limit of their respective circumpherences, is not replete with Lead or Silver, & the like is true of all other dense bodies. If the Lead or Silver is premised to be absolutely solid, it would exclude all other specific or different natured entity from the limit of their respective circumpherences, which might rightly be denominated Lead, or Silver entity, as there could be no alloy of other sort of being, within their contents but as Silver or Lead is, (in its present state), there are vacuums not repleat with either Silver or Lead, within the circumpherences of those bodies, these vacuums compose no part of the one or the other of those bodies, and consequently do not exist of Silver or Lead, yet they exist of something if they exist at all, for that to exist of nothing is a contradiction, and to exist of some thing, is the same as to be, or possess entity, which excludes the notion of (an empty) vacuum, and establishes the Doctrine of a plenum in the premised circumpherences of the bodies of Silver and Lead before mentioned, and from the same parity of reasoning, would do the same throughout the universe.

Should we premise a certain void in the creation of a greater or less circumpherence, yet we should be obliged in our Idea of it, to bound it on the edge of entity or of being or not limit it at all, for a premised line of circumpherence in nonentity could be no where, for space or place are relative Ideas, and have no other existence than what is derived from the possession or occupancy of real being, (of some sort or other) to which they are relative. To imagine a place or space in nothing is an Idle fantom of the brain without reality, for mere nothing is incapable of place or extention, so that there could not be either a great or less circumpherence in it. We may and have premised such a circumpherence as before observed upon, but when we come to reason on the abstracted position of it, we find that there can be no positive existence of place or space abstractedly considered from being or entity to which they refer, nor can there be any possible degrees in nothing, so that a greater or less circumpherence in nothing is but a mere chimera of the mind. It is the same as a great nothing, which can not be biger than a little nothing, since neither of them have any real existence, therefore there must be a plenum of real entity throughout the universe.

The definition of the word space, is "the "distance between any two bodies or points," but this distance is not in nonentity, but in the atmosphere or etherial regions, which has its different degrees of subtileness, that part which is contiguous to the cirface of the globe is thicker and heavier than that which is more remote from it. Those who have indeavoured to cross some part of the Andes in South America, the Highest Mountains in the known World, have part of them perished in consequence of the subtilety of the air, which in stead of heaving the vital bellowses, passed through the little perspirating pores of the body, and deprived them of life, while others of the party, advancing not quite so high on the Mountain, but pereceiving in themselves distress in the act of breathing, went down the Mountain again, till they came to a proper medium of air, where they could breath as usual, and found by experience, that such lubbers as we are, was by nature incapable of inhabiting the etherial regions.

The ether which is much finer, or rarer than Air, in which animal life cannot subsist as before observed commences from the limit of our atmosphere, and extends we know not how far in the heavenly space, (not nonentity.) nor are we able to conceive of the different degrees of rarefycation, which by nature it is capable, or really possessed of any more than we are able to conceive of perfect solidity. We may however be certain that neither ether or any other substance, can be so thin or subtile, as not to be, which excludes the notion of nonentity and consequently of a vacuum from the universe, and establishes the doctrine of a universal plenum.

Furthermore, there must be a universal plenum of intelligent being, abstractly considered from that of the material, otherwise God could not be omnipresent, for if there is a vacuum of all being, in any part of the universe, it would not only exclude the entity of matter, but of spirit, and consequently circumscribe the infinity of God. That God should be included in any place, or excluded from any place, is a contradiction to his being every where present. The infinity and omnipresence of God does not imply his being every thing, but every where, consequently his essence must needs pervade all nature, and possess all space, as well as possess all knowledge power goodness and absolute perfection. To suppose that God is all things, would exclude his creation, and make us with other things rational and irrational, to be parts or members of God, or to be included in his essence, which is absurd since on such a position, God would be weake miserable and sinful; we must therfore abstract the Idea of the essence of God from the essence of his creation, and conceive of him to be the author of nature, but not nature it self, and however inconceivable the Divine nature is to us, we must ascribe absolute perfection to it, for if we limit the perfection of God, in our conception of him, we un-God him, and since in Order that God should be perfect he must be unlimited in his perfections, and as a premised exclusion of him from a vacuum, or from any part of space however small (according to our comparitive Idea of it,) would infringe on his attribute of infinity or actual possession of every part of the universe, therefore we infer an absolute plenum of intelligent entity.

Our senses and understandings are so imperfect in the just conception of material or moral entity, that we are more or less perplexed in our apprehension of the existence of matter, of various densities and qualities; and at the same time to conceive of the universal existence of God, since we are accustomed to some kinds of conjealed substances being impassible to others; so that they cannot (from occular demonstration) be both in one and the same place at the same time, such sort of material existences can not pervade each other, but does it follow from hence that the pure and perfect essence of God can not pervade such bodies, or any others in the universe, undoubtedly God was wise enough, to have so constituted his Creation, as not to have precluded his own omnipresence whether we understand it or not.

And if those bodies we denominate to be dense or conjealed, are no obstruction to the omnipresence of the Divine nature, then human souls or other finite intelligences could be no hindrance of its extention, nor would it interfere with their local existence. The Divine essence as we have already observed, being different from all others with the rest of its perfections, must be capable of, and actually pervade the creation. We do not know whether it is necessary or possible for two distinct human souls to occupy or possess the same place, or identical part of space at the same time or not, yet we readily perceive it to be requisite to an infinite spiritual being, not to be included in any place, nor excleded from any place, and therefore must possess all space and consequently pervade not only the essences of finite intelligences, but the universal creation, or it could not be omnipresent and consequently not a

God, for as we have argued that a mere finite intelligent being, must exist some where if any where at all, so likewise the Divine essence must exist every where if at all, or it could not be omnipresent; for as a limited intelligent being, in Order to have a place, must have some mysterious sort of substance (to us) to enable it to possess or occupy the same, and give entity to it, so from the same parity of reasoning, we must admit that an infinite intelligent being, implies some pure subtance of which the Divine essence exists, and by which it is Omnipresent.

And though we cannot comprehend this infinite manner of existence, yet it implies no contradiction, as it does on the part of my opponents to suppose an infinite being of no substance, who existed no where, should pervade all nature and be absolutely omnipresent; and give being to human souls of no substance; who exist no where.

Christian tradition has undoubtedly been the means of misguiding the minds of those who have been therein educated; on the subject of the Divine omnipresence. When we can once be perswaded that a God could become incarnate, and live a number of months in the circumpherence of a womb, occupy an human organ, be born, & continue in a State of humanity about thirty years, we loose sight of his omnipresence, and at once conceive of him to be local. And when we consult the Theology of Moses, we find that he ascribes motion to God saying, "and the Lord came down upon Mount Sinai," and again, "and the Lord came down to see the "City, and the Tower which the children of men "builded," and in another place he describes an interview which he had with the Lord, when he graciously gave him a peep at his back parts from a crevice of the rock as he passed by "that I will put "thee in a cleft of the rock, and will cover thee with "my hand while I pass by, and I will take away mine "hand, and thou shalt see my back parts, but my "face shall not be seen." The perfection of omnipresence in God is inconsistent with motion in him. Local beings only are by nature capable of motion, which as necessarily excludes them from one place, as it introduces them into another, but for a being who is every where present, to come "down upon mount Sinai," or to pass by Moses, or to move from place to place, is impossible and unnecessary, since he possesses all places. Such traditions which are believed to be from God, have a natural tendency to prejudice the mind against the progressive discovery of truth or science, and fix it down to whatever tradition it may have received as sacred, however ridiculous and chimerical.

Section II

Of the immortality of the soul.

The Doctrine of a real though invisible substance of the soul, will not (in my opinion) militate against the immortality of it, but on the contrary render the evidence of it more conspicuous and unexceptionable. Though our external senses and internal reflections and consciousness, are incompitent to perceive, or comprehend the intrinsic Nature of the soul, yet, we may negatively understand, that it does not exist of sensless matter, since we are conscious of the display of rationality, which stupid matter is void of; and in as much as the essence of the soul does not derive its existence from incogitative substances, which, in external nature, we perceive by the senses, we can not infer the dissolution of the soul from that of the body; yet if the Soul was material its dissolution would follow of consequence.

But should we exclude in our Idea of the essence of the soul all possible substance from it, we should Ideally exclude its existence, for a soul must exist of something since it can not exist of nothing. What that substance is we can not define any farther than to say that it is a thinking substance, or a substance that is capable of reflection and consciousness, part of the properties of the soul are intelligent exertions or agency, but it is probable that we shall be able to investigate but a partial knowledge of its properties. That immortality is an essential property of it, is the question under consideration, a question of more importance to us than any or all others, this we will therefore particulary attend to, but as this subject has been largely discussed in the fourth Chapter of the volumn to which this is an appendix, we shall indeavour to omit such arguments as are therein contained, and add some that are there omitted.

As the soul is a moral being we must rely on moral reasonings for the investigation of its eternalization; for neither mathematical nor what we call sensible demonstration (which is predicated on the senses) can extend to it, for by the mere perception of our senses we have no conception of a spiritual or conscious being, but are apprized of such an existence merely from a consciousness of it, nor has our mathematical computations or calculations, which are so essential to astronomical knowledge, and many other parts of science, any thing to do in this investigation but such clear and unexceptionable sort of demonstration, is calculated for the discovery of the existence, magnitude, distance, number, quantity, diamiter, and movements of external objects, as those of our solar System, or any other that come within the description of number, admeasurement, quantity and the like, so that when we reason on the immortality of the soul, and find that we are destitute of those kind of proofs for the reality of it, that are so certain, curious and useful to us in most of the concerns and vicissitudes of life, we are apt to be more or less nonplussed, and wonder that Divine providence has not given us as full and certain a demonstration of our immortality as of external and sensible Objects, not considering that if the soul had been an object of sense, it would have been material and consequently mortal with the body, and not capable of surviveing it. Hence we infer, that we are too apt to demand of providence such kind of demonstration for our immortality as is utterly inconsistent with it. The imperceptibleness of the soul to the organs of sense, in stead of being considered as militating against it endless continuance in being, should rather be adjudged in favour of it, it is not flesh and blood and therefore may survive death, though it must have existed of substance or it could not have been united with the body or capable of a survival of it at death as we have before argued. If we duly consider this matter we may be satisfied that God could not have given us a greater or more certain evidence of our immortality than he has done. Admitting the reality of it to take place in future, and to continue to be taking place for ever, or without end, yet it would be impossible for us in this stage of being, to conceive how such beings as unbodied human souls could exist, and be conversible after the dissolution of their bodies. This is a species of knowledge which in nature is not attainable until our premised progressive future State of being and action in the Order of intelligent existence takes place, for admitting the reality of such a state, how could we conceive of the manner of it, till the succession of time and revolution of events bring us into that premised future condition of being and action, and consequently into a consciousness of it: as of things in this life. We can not be to day conscious of an existence tomorrow, nor of one moment beyond the present tense, so that the future existence that we hope for either in this life or that which we expect beyond death, can not be made known to us, till future existence and circumstances render the future consciousness of it to be in fact true, for consciousness is predicated on the truth of things or facts, in which there can be no deception. Thus it appears, that were our souls (admitted to be) immortal, yet we could have no consciousness of it in this life, for that our consciousness of being and action, can not take place in our minds, any sooner or faster, than our progressive existence and actions either in this or in a future manner of existence will admit, nor is it in nature possible for God Almighty, to have given us a more extensive consciousness of our existence than what he has done. he could not to day have made us conscious of of an existence to morrow, for it would not be in fact true; nor could he in this life have given us a consciousness of a never ending existence, for the reasons already assigned, but this is no argument against such an existence, any more than that because this days consciousness does not extend to tomorrow, therefore tomorrow will never be, or because a man born blind has no conception or consciousness of colours, therefore there are none. Our ignorance of futurity may be an Occasion of distrust of it, especially to inconsiderate minds, who collect but little or no knowledge by reasoning, from which Source only we are able to apprehend any thing of an existence beyond the time being. Through the medium of our senses we have a conception of external existences, and by recollection thereon, and by considering their properties, relations, nature, and tendencies, we in some measure explore their constitutions or at least their entity, and we find from traditions both oral and written, that rain and Sunshine, Summer and Winter, *Rainy and fair Season*, Monsoons & refreshing breazes, Seed time and harvest, day and night, have interchangably succeeded each other, and do not scruple but that the same Order of nature will still be continued, yet are not certain that there will ever be another day, but having been used to a past succession of them, habituate our selves into an expectation and firm belief of others yet to come, but this order of external things is perceptible to our senses, which we call sensible demonstration and can not be had for any thing in *futuro*, for sensible proofs extend no farther than past or present actual perception, and can not give us any perception of the existence of naked souls or spirits; nor of any thing in this World or any other, a moment beyond the present tense. Had it been possible and agreeable to Divine providence, to have as yet exemped human nature from mortality, and all the race of man was still alive, (though we should be unable to stow them in this World,) we might have had from habit an expectation and strong belief, that we should liue for ever in this manner of existence, and thus conceived of our selves to be immortal, but since on the position that we survive death, and pass from these bodies and this World imperceptably to make room for others to follow us (probably to some of the heavenly Orbs which are perceptible to us here), and as we may rationally expect to progressively rise in the order of being, above the wretched condition of humanity, we may well imagin that human souls much dignified in the manner of existence and action, in the superor regions, would have little or no desire, and probably no power to return to this World again, since if they should, it is no wise likeley that they could converse with, or communicate one Idea to us or even so much as come within the discovery of our senses, in consequence of their unbodied and exalted superiority of nature to ours. But should any departed soul return to this World again with a body organized like ours, it would like ours be obnoxious to a second death, which would evince no thing of its immortality to us, but rather evince a certain rotation of mortality. The truth of the matter is, we are incapable of holding any corispondence with any other but mortal beings, nor can we have a true conception of an immortal being or pure spirit while in this life; nor is it at all requisite that we should: Our business is at present in this World for which our nature and faculties are wisely calculated. Should we be able to conceive of the manner of our premised future existence, it might imbitter the present life, from an anxious desire to be advanced in the Order of being, faster than the revolutions of events according to the Order of nature would permit, though a conception of a state of immortality is impossible to us for this obvious reason, that could we conceive of it, it must be like this state of existence, and then it would be mortal; for if it is not like the condition of humanity we can haue no conception of it. Hence it appears that an immortal state is to us in this life inconceivable, and yet if it was conceived of by us, it would imbitter our present enjoyments, from a participation of a superior blessedness in the progressive order of being, which the Order of time and revolution of events procrastinated.

Finally, the immortality of the soul does not at all depend on our reasonings concerning its essence, though our present cumfortable prospect or faith in it may depend thereon, and though our speculations on this important subject, may be more or less imperfect, yet the providence of God in the Order of nature relative thereto as well as to things in general is absolutely perfect, and therefore cannot fail of ultimately perfecting the best good of all his Creatures, and since under a wise powerful and benificent providence, as we must admit that of the Divine to be, immortality would be the greatest, most extensive and important good, that Almighty God could possibly bestow, without which all other endowments, gifts and benefits, could not be of any considerable consequence to us, by reason of a temporary continuance, and as the absolute perfection of a God, is abundently competent to perfect so benelovent an event, the moral certainty of it follows of consequence. This inference is deduced from the immutable perfection of the Divine Nature, and is of more consolation to us than all our other reasonings on this subject.

After what has been evinced of the immortality of the soul, should any still complain of the insufficiency of the evidence, they may with equal impropriety complain, that the present is not the next century, that they might be in possession of the knowledge of the World to come. How much more becoming such creatures as we are, would it be, to confide in the ultimate goodness of God, than to remonstrate against the government of the ruler of the Universe.

God is (not only infinitely wise and powerful, but) infinitely good.

The immortality of the soul (with the blessings of providence,) is the greatest possible good that God could bestow upon the soul.—Therefore the soul is immortal.

If the major and miner propositions in the foregoing syllagism are true, the consequence of the immortality of the soul is likewise true. The major proposition is as true as that there is a God. The miner proposition is as true as that with the blessings of providence it would be our greatest good to be immortal.

and as these propositions are both true, therefore we are immortal beings.

God is ultimately Just.

Justice in all events does not take place in this World.

Therefore there must be an existence beyond this life, wherein the ultimate Justice of God will take place.

The Justice of God none will dispute, and that Justice does not take place in all cases in this life is too obvious to be disputed, and therefore the inference of a future state of being follows of necessary consequence.

The first of the foregoing syllogisms, founded on the wisdom power and goodness of God, is conclusively demonstrative of the never ending existence of the soul. The second which is founded on the immutable ultimate Justice of God, does not certainly infer a never ending existence of the soul, though it necessarily infers a future State of being to this, wherein the injustice that is done in this World, must be righteously adjusted, the delinquents punished, and the virtuous rewarded. It was from the benevolence of the Divine Nature, that we received an existence in the present life, for his natural attributes of power and Wisdom might not have induced him to it: nor could his perfection of Justice have insured us an existence at all, for no Justice could have been pleaded on our behalf before we had a being, but since God has given us a being and state of agency, we haue become objects of Justice, nor is it fit or possible for God to refuse it to us, therefore it follows according to Justice, that since the distribution of it is not perfect in this World, there must be another to come, wherein it may be perfected, and when Justice has been rightiously administred, we haue no farther claim to existence merely from that perfection of the Divine nature, but eternally shall have a Just ground of confidence in the goodness thereof, whereon to predicate our hope of Immortality. The Justice of God is an absolute security, that the display of his providence to us as individuals, must ultimately be better for us than not to have been, since a being worse than not to have been, would furnish a complaint against both the Justice and goodness of God, but in asmuch as God is both Just and good, our immortality is as clearly demonstrable, as any proposition that respects the moral sciences, though not so readily pereceived by such minds as are but little accustomed to reasoning, as other moral truths which may be investigated by a less number of propositions and inferences, for as we must first by reasoning from the works of Nature, investigate the knowledge of the being of a God, and secondly, from our own rational Nature investigate his moral perfections, we thirdly apply those perfections in the investigation of our immortality, as in the foregoing syllogisms. The arguments for the being, natural attributes and moral perfections of God, are exhibited in the first and second chapters of the first volum of this work, and the moral perfections of God in which most philosophers and Christians (except the calvinists) agree, were in this investigation of the immortality of the soul taken for granted, and though the Progress of the arguments for the immortality of the soul have a longer retrospetion, as predicated on those of the moral perfections of God, than those arguments that merely evince his being, yet if the whole chain of arguments are Just, the proposition of the immortality of the soul is as certain, as those other positions on which they are predicated.

Finally, there is too much wisom power and goodness displayed, in the creation, regulation, and support of such part of the natural and moral World with which we are acquainted, to suppose that death extingusheth the being of man. The sensless creation as has been before observed, was brought into existence merely to subserve the intelligent, as the Sensless considered abstractly from the moral, could not have been an Object of Divine providence, for that mere incogitative beings are by nature incapable of enjoyment or understanding, and if man the most exalted finite being that we are accquainted with, ceases to be at death, and in life is surrounded with so many evils that abstractedly considered from a future State of being and enjoyment, life could hardly be estimated a benefit and the plan of providence would be so contracted and inconsiderable, as to be unworthy of God. The display of such vast power and wisdom would prompt us to conclude, that there must have been some adiquate object in the Divine view, which must extend to something beyond human life, since the display of providence in the present condition of being, manifests a competency of wisdom and power sufficient to continue our existence without end; this therefore must have been the benevolent design of God, which will fully account for his creation and moral Government without which it would appear to be inadiquate and imperfect: nor is it reconcilable to the exalted character that we ought to ascribe to God, to suppose that he has implanted such strong desires and expectations in our souls, of surviveing the grave for no purpose. It seems to be nearly the same as promiseing us in (the constitution of) our natural desires and expectataions, a state of being beyond this life. which on the position of its not comeing to pass, would imply a deception. When we reflect on the united adorations of one generation of the human species after another to God, for the benefits of being, and more especially (since this life is so short and miserable,) for the hope of immortality predicated on natural desires and moral reasonings, we can hadly imagine that the God of nature after all, would by the stroke of death frustrate our expectations, by a cruel annihilation. Had God in the constitution of our souls determined that they should become extinct at death, most probably he would not have given us any hope or apprehension of a future state of being, for he could not be pleased with deceiving his creatures, by frusterating the fervent desires and hope that he had originally implanted in them. The most rational wise and virtuous of all the generations of mankind, have from principles of humanity, Justice, benificence, goodness and truth, counteracted their present interest, advantage and happiness more or less, in Order to to recommend their doings to their own conscienes, and consequently to God, under whose providence they have expected to exist in another state, with the virtuous habits that they had acquired in this life, which they have flattered themselves would redound to their happiness in the World to come, but if death terminates the being of man, moral good and evil are empty names, and deception and villainy may be more advantageous than truth and Justice. Thus Oppression, violence and Wickedness, would as likeley if not more probably be crowned with a temporary happiness, than the Opposite habits of Justice, benevolence, and morality. Was it not for the hope of immortality morality would loose its influence in the World, and then nothing but deceit, oppression fraud, and injustice of every kind could be expected in society, of which there are too much at present.

By all the speculations into providence that we are able to make, abstractly considered from a future State of existence, it would not appear upon the whole, that God was a Just, good and beneficent being, since murder, oppression and every species of cruelty, are more or less perpitrated with impunity in this World; we must therefore admit another to come, in which a Just and righteous retribution must take place, for God may as well cease to be, as cease to be utimately good, benificent and Just.

The conclusion of the arguments for immortality are sum'd up to be this, that a God of Justice will be Just, and of goodness will be good in the displays of his providence, and as these perfections with those of wisdom and power, are infinite in God, they cannot fail of perfecting the immortality of man.

Section III.

Of the consciousness of the agency and entity of the human soul, and of the insufficiency of its external sensations, to discover the existence and actions of moral beings.

Our compound nature existing of sensation and reflection, is in many respects mysterious to us, nor is it at all surprising, that the agency as well as nature of such creatures as we are, (partly spiritual and partly animal,) should more or less involve our speculations thereon in doubt, and perplexity. We ough to analyse and critically distinguish, between the knowledge that we immediately have from our own consciousness, and that which we premise to have acquired by the progress of reasoning, as the former is certain and true, and the latter may be true or false, according as we may be supposed to reason right or wrong. Strictly speaking we can not reason wrong, for such part of the progress as may terminate in a wrong conclusion, is deception and not reasoning, hence we infer, that reasoning is always right, but as we all pretend to reason in our disquisition of things whether we do or not, and likewise set up for Judges of it, and as every one is Orthodox to himself, we have no standard whereby to decide the authenticity of our reasonings, but individuals must Judge for themselves. some writers have defined reasoning, to be right reasoning, but this every one will premise his reasoning to be, whether right or wrong, so that we gain nothing by using the word right before the word reason, as every one supposes his reasoning to be right, till he is convinced of the contrary, and since all (real) reasoning is right, right reason is the same as reason, and it is our business to distinguish it from error, and not to call that reason which is not so: but the conscious knowledge that we have of the existence and agency of our own souls we do not acquire by (a progress of) reasoning, and therefore are not lyable to be mistaken or deceived therein, as in argumentative investigations which will be farther considered in its order.

The Author of nature has intuitively and universally impressed on our minds; a conscious knowledge of our agency (or power of action,) in all cases wherein it is attended with the consequences of moral good and evil. This consciousness of agency of which our minds are intuitively certain, is not derived from the deductions of reasoning, all ranks and degrees of mankind are equally sure of the reality of it, a sense of liberty of action is inherent in the soul, and originated with it, and is essential to it, and we are as conscious of it, as of the existence of the soul, since it is not from sensation or reasoning, that we are apprized of the one or the other, but have our evidence of both merely from our consciousness thereof.

God has not made it requisite that we should become philosophers or understand science, in order to know that we are (free) agents, in matters that respect the morality of imorality of our actions, for there are comparitively but few of our species who have arrived to any considerable degree in sciantifical knowledge: and as the Divine Legeslator has promulgated his Law to every of us who understand moral good and evil, he has also co-extensively given us a consciousness that we are (free) agents, which together with the knowledge of right and wrong, makes us accoutable creatures, for as a sense of accountableness pre-supposes the knowledge of moral good and evil, it also pre-supposes a power or liberty of agency, since the mere understanding of right and wrong, without the power of agency therein, could lay us under no moral obligation to conform to the good and refuse the evil, for that the mere knowledge of moral fitness in us, abstractly considered from a power, or an ability of conformity thereto in life and action, could not render us amenable either to God, society, or to ourselves, since our accountableness originates as much from our power of agency, as from our knowledge of the difference between moral good and evil. Hence we infer, that it is the understanding together with the ability of a conformity to moral rectitude, that makes us probationary and accountable creatures. And it matters not whether we are wise enough fully to investigate the subject of our agency; or the nature and manner of the souls exertion of itself, since we are conscious of intelligent being and of agency, from whence results all our mental happiness and misery. Was it necessary in Order to our being free and consequently accountable beings, that we should comprehend the essence, spring, and manner of our liberty, or how agency is extended in all and every respect, and be able to solve all questions concerning it, our liberty in consequence thereof would be foreclosed, together with our accountability, since none of our race are wise enough, fully and perfectly to understand all this. Those who are the greatest adepts in the science of anatomy, have not discovered every minute part of the (animal) machenery of the human body, or the respective usefulness of such parts as they have discovered, to the whole, nor has the united wisdom of mankind investigated the intrinsic reason, or natural cause of motion in the human body, or how it is that we move a hand or finger. We know from experience that our hands & feet obey our volitions, but how volition operates on an animal machine we know not, yet should any one deny the reality of such motion or exertion he would be deemed a mad man, since motion is an Object of sense, in which all uniformty agree: nor are we less certain of the reality of our souls, than of our bodies, nor of our agency than of either of the other positions. The body and its motions are pereceived by the senses, and the soul, and its agency by its consciousness, and we may as well dispute against the reality of the external motion or action of the hand, because we cannot comprehend it, as against the agency or action of the soul, because we cannot comprehend it. Furthermore, we have the same kind and degree of evidence and no other, of the reality of our agency, as we have of the reality of our souls, the evidence of both resulting merely from an immediate consciousness thereof, and since we have the evidence of the existence of the soul, from its conscious exertions, and in the same exertions, we are likewise conscious that we are (free) agents, we can not therefore be deceived with respect to our agency, any more than with respect to our existence, which is bringing the argument to a decision in favour of human agency, for if we are as certain of it as of existence, we may venture to conclude our selves to be spontaneously active, for it is too evident to be controverted; that we Obtain both the knowledge of our intellectual existence and agency from the same manner and degree of evidence, or in other words from the same conscious exercise of our minds, nor is it in nature possible for us to have a conscious knowledge of the exercise of our minds, without having at the same time, an intuitive knowledge that the same exercise is free, the consciousness of the one cannot be without the consciousness of the other, for agency or the power of agency, is congenial with intelligence, and in the constitution of human nature, inseperably united to, and connected with it.

We may from our consciousness of intelligent action, infer the existence of the soul, abstractly considered from our agency, since mere action implies being, without considering whether we are necessary or free beings, for that nonentity can not act at all, or be necessary or free as it has no existence, but in agency we are possessed of a two fold consciousness, the one respects merely our actions, and the other the manner of them, since our manner of acting, as well as our actions themselves, are comprized in our consciousness of them, and it is a consciousness of the manner of our acting, which inform us that we are free agents, as a mere consciousness of action, without a consciousness of the manner of them, could not inform us whether we acted spontaneously or was acted upon by some other being or cause, and since every one by consulting his own consciousness will find that he has a power of agency, or that this is the manner of his acting, we need not pry into science for the discovery of our (free) agency.

Furthermore, we may deduce the evidence of the certainty of our intelligent being, as well from our consciousness of liberty, as that of action abstracted from it, for that mere liberty or a power to act implies being, or an agent in whom it inheres or resides. Liberty therefore includes an Idea of existence, as it exhibits to us a consciousness of the manner of the exertion of the soul, and as the manner of those exertions implies exertion it self, and exertion implies being, therefore our consciousness of the power of spontaneous agency evinces our existence; as it makes known to us the intrinsic mode or manner of our actions, and as the mode of those actions imply their existence, and their existence imply the existence of the soul, consequently our consciousness of liberty by tracing it to action, and from action to the soul, evinces its existence.

From what has been already argued on this subject it follows, that we have as great a certainty of our (free) agency, as we have of our intellectual being, and are as certain of that as we are that we have a sensitive body, for the acts of our senses are not more certain,, than our consciousness of intelligent action, since our consciousness extends both to sensation and reflection without which we could have no knowledge of either.

Having briefly considered the nature and force of the evidence of our power of agency, arising merely from our consciousness thereof, which amounts to an intuitive certainty of it, we proceed to the consideration of our bodies and of external things in general. An accurate examination into our own constitution will discover, that our organized senses can not perceive, nor can we through their medium, have any conception of the soul or of its actions or operations, for that the soul and its actions, and the manner of its actions, which is the same as the soul and its agency, (as agency implies not only action but the manner of action,) are altogether imperceptible to the five senses. The soul or spirit of man is not visible to the sight, nor vibrating to the drum of the ear, nor can it excite the Idea of sound immediately, though mediately or by the use of the organ of the body, and invented instruments it can do it, nor can we taste, smell, or feel a soul. Furthermore our own souls are as imperceptible to their own respective sensoriums, as the souls of others, and so are their respective agencies. We can no more by our senses perceive the actions or agency of our own souls, than through those mediums we can perceive our souls themselves, for both our own souls with all others of the species, with all their actions or agencies, are imperceptible to the faculties of sensation, and as our senses are by nature incompitent to communicate the knowledge of any moral being, or the exertions or agency of such being, or beings to us. We therefore infer that we have the understanding of that part of our nature we call moral, and of its spontaneous powers and exertions, merely from an intuitive consciousness thereof. The intuitive method of understanding the nature and exertions of our own souls; is altoger dissimular and unlike the manner of our coming at the understanding of external things, which are the proper objects of sense, and come within the mode of their perception. Hence we infer that the medium of sensation is inadiquate to mere mental discoveries.

We know by experience that we can no otherwise corrispond with each other, or communicate or receive Ideas, but by adiquate representations made to our bodily senses, either oral or written of which we understand the signs. Thus it is that the knowledge of external objects is communicated to the mind, by the instrumentality of the senses, as argued at large in the first and second sections of the fourth Chapter of the theology frequently mentioned. Our external senses are therefore the only medium by which the first perceptions, and consequently the knowledge of external things are discoverable to us, yet the mind makes no manner of discovery of it self, or of its spontaneous exertions through that medium, but from an immediate consciousness of thinking as before argued, in which consciousness of being or of the exertion of agency, the senses do not act a part: nor is there any need of their assistence in the discovery of mere mental beings, whose essences are too subtile, vivid and pure to come within their notice. The acts of consciousness which an intelligent being has of it self and its agency, is immediate which necessarily excludes the intervention of any intermediate cause whatever, whether that of its own natural sensorium or, of those invented mediums called glasses. The animal machine is no more than a piece of the Divine art, however stupendious to our imagination and surpassing our art and comprehension.

The soul is too superior a being, to need any machinery in its immediate consciousness of it self, and its actions. Did the soul stand in need of such helps for the knowledge of its (internal) being, it would militate against its immortality, as death destroys the machine of sense. The knowledge of external things is (in this life) mediate, but not Immediate, since it is acquired by the instrumentality of the Organs of sense, and through the medium of human invented instruments, but the conscious knowledge which we have of our intelligent selves, is immediate, as it is independent of natural or artificial mediums, or instruments. Was it not that in the order of nature we were previously apprized of our intelligent selves, we could not secondly have been apprised of other things, therefore we premise that the intuitive knowledge, which we immediately have of our mental selves, is prerequisitely assential to our knowledge of external things, which we call mediate knowledge, because it is obtained by the instrumentality of the senses, or human constructed instruments, as alread sufficiently described.

The conscious knowledge therefore which an intelligent being has merely from himself, and that immediately (and exclusive of all mediate causes,) can not be a deception, or mistake, as it is the intuitive or certain knowledge of being and agency, or the manner of action, which can not and does not at all depend, on human reasoning or art for its investigation, and therefore is not lyable to errors, mistakes or any deception, as our scientiphical reasonings on external things are. Hence we infer that the apprehensions which we have from intuition is certainly true, and is the spring, foundation and source of all our knowledge, and since the understanding of our (free) or spontaneous agency, does not result from reasoning or argumentation, but from a conscious intuition of it to all mankind, we can not herein be mistaken or deceived, as it is possible for us to be, in matters relative to external things, wherein prejudices, errors and mistakes may interve, and make our conclusions faulty and irregular, and consequently widely different the one from the other, though we all agree in the conscious knowledge that we are (free) agents, and yet in other matters have been ridiculously divided and subdivided.

No sooner do we depart from the basis of the intuitive knowledge of our agency, in which all agree, and further essay to explain and investigate the subject, than we more or less disagree in our apprehensions and final conclusions concerning it, as the learned disputations thereon may witness. Yet those clashing and diverse, and I might add party, as well as imperfect reasonings ought not, and in the fitness of things cannot militate against the intuitive certainty of our moral agency, of which we are as certain as of a moral existence: Yet when we have the weakness to compare our agency with external and incogitative things, that are necessarily governed, we lose sight of our liberty, and by reasoning from false analogy, involve it in destiny as argued more at large in the eighth section of the theology, in the fourth chapter to which the reader is referred, and also to the succeeding section of this appendix.

SECTION IV.

Of the natural impossibility of our acting, both necessarily, and freely, in the same action, and at the same time, and of the confusion which attends our reasoning from false analogy.

From the preceeding reasonings, on the nature and agency of the human soul, we may discern, that many perplexing questions may arise, relative thereto, and though our researches, and critical examinations into its essence, and manner of action, may be more or less imbarrassed, in consequence of the weakness of many, and the sophestry of a comparative few; yet it ought not to militate against the reality of our being free agents, any more than against our cogitative and conscious existence, for if a conscious intuition of the existence of the soul is to be relied on, the Intuitive knowledge of our agency is likewise to be depended on, as before argued.

In our disquisition on the subject of human agency, we have frequently made use of two words, where one (to the learned) would have done without the other, the more clearly, and unexceptionably to be intelligable to readers in general, to wit, *free agent*, or *liberty of agency*, or *power of agency*, Those who are versed in language and logic, well know, that agency implies the liberty of agency, and that agent, implies a power of agency or action. Agency likewise implies a being, or agent, in whom it inheres, or is united, from whose power action is exerted or suspended, in short, agency (in man,) implies or includes the Idea of a power, which is compitent to act, or not act, within the circle of its capacity of action, or agency, or as applicable to the objects of it, and those of mankind only, who have such a power, are truly agents (or accountable creatures,) and if agents, free, since liberty is essential to agency, and agency to an agent, in whom it inheres or is united, so that logically speaking, the words *free agent, or power of agency*, does not enlarge or alter the definition of the word agent, as the Ideas of freedom, liberty, and power, are necessarily included in our complex Idea of an agent, and are the constituant parts of its being. Free agency is therefore (strictly speaking) tautology, it is the same as agency, agency. Abstract the Idea of freedom from an agent, and it would cease to be one. The point therefore in dispute, is resolved into this single question, to wit, whether we are agents or not. It is however my opinion, that in logical and close reasoning, we had better use some tautology, of both words and Ideas, than such conciseness as would not be clearly explanitory, to the majority of readers. The flowery stile of oration, would be very improper, for the investigation of the abstruce parts of Science, or to make new discoveries therein, though it is pleasing to the fancy, and accelerating to the passions like poetry or music, when it is juditiously displayed, on those kind of subjects, for which it is calculated. We will now return to our subject, which demands strong plain language and

Ideas. By comparing the sensless part of the creation with the moral, we shall easily perceve that there is an obvious difference between them, the former is by nature incogitative, and the latter intelligent and conscious. The solar system does not move, but is moved, it has not the power of spontaneous motion or action, but its orbits are mechanically and involuntarily actuated, and their motions periodically regulated, by the superintending power of the universe; for they are sensless and passive, and have their being and Order, merely for the subserviency of moral beings. Omnipotent power could not govern moral agents, (or beings,) by such absolute unconditional and necessary laws, as those that actuate the stupid solar system, since agency is essential to them, as long therefore as moral beings retain their nature, they must retain their agency, and as long as inanimate and sensles beings, retain theirs, they must be incapable of it, and therefore if moved at all, it must be done by something that is not inherent in themselves, as they are void of understanding and volition, and consequently of the power of spontaneous action.

Hence it is that God could not [ ] that the Ideas which the generality of mankind connect with the word *plenum*, are the same which they connect with solidity, and as absolute solidity would (if true,) preclude all motion, they have therefore inferred (most commonly) the impossibility of a plenum; which if solid (as they suppose it must be,) would not only preclude motion in itself, but exclude all manner of existence but itself, whether of God, man, angel, or spirit, and render all our notions of alloy, mixture and temperature delusory and false. And it must be acknowledged, that the foregoing inference would be Just, provided a plenum and a solidity were identically the same. But a universe of inconceivable kinds and varieties of specific entity; both cogitative and incogitative, together with such sort of entity as comes within the notice of our senses, may and must needs be replete with entity of one kind or other; and consequently constitue a plenum, for this plain reason, because any premised vacuum either great or small, if it exists at all, must exist of something which is, as nonentity cannot constitute a vacuum, and if a vacuum exists of substance however imperceptible to our senses, whether cogitative or incogitative, it is a contradiction to call it a vacuum, since it is replete with real existence of one kind or other, and as nonentity or the absence of all being cannot give an existence to a vacuum, any more than it could to the Universe. Therefore we infer a Universal plenitude of being.

That God by his omnipresence pervades all nature, is a doctrine conceeded to by Philosophers and Christians, though none can comprehend the manner of such an Existence but God himself: he cannot be included in any place, or excluded from any place, for that he [ ] presently possesses all places, otherwise he would be circumscribed and consequently finite, and therefore not a God. Nevertheless our organized senses are not acute enough to perceive anything of the Divine essence: nor of the essence of our own souls, or of intelligent substances in general, yet as they have an existence they must possess place, and must therefore exist of substance; wherby they are capable of occupying the same as before argued. But intelligent beings do not possess space in the same manner as dense Bodies does. Was the Divine Essence perfectly solid, it must have excluded the existence of the creation, in which case God would not have pervaded all things, but actually have been all existence himself; and on the other hand, was the creation absolutely solid, it would exclude the existence of a God. Therefore neither Gor nor his Creation are absolutely solid. That there is a God, creation evinces, and that there is a creation our senses evinces, therefore both God and his creation exist, but there is no such thing as real solidity in the Universe. We are apprized by our senses and by experiments that some substances are more dense than others, this comparitive Idea of solidity, is all that we can conceive of about it, for of solidity in the abstract we have no perception. Nor have we a perception of a plenum, nevertheless have from the reason and necessity of things demonstrated the impossibility of a vacuum, which necessarily infers a plenum. Thus it is from logical reasoning, and not from our External senses, that we are apprized of the reality of a plenum. For our organs of sense give us no perception at all of Intelligent substances, and but very little about those coumpounded of matter [ ] internal essence of things in general are not perceptible to us. We know that such bodies which we (eroniously) call solid, by reason of certain degrees of densities, with which (to us) they are mysteriously possessed cannot two of them, be in the same place at the same time, for though they are not perfectly solid, yet have such a simularity towards it, that one body would repulse the other, and make it impossible that both should occupy the same place at the same time. This we know in fact to be true, but as to the subtile ether, and other thin or rarified substances of the incogitative nature, which are not perceptible to our senses, or to senses assisted by instruments of human art, how, or in what manner they occupy space we know not, yet that they do it, somehow or other, we are certain; or at least as certain, as that they have an existence. Should we deny the existence of all substances and beings which escape the perception our external senses we should of consequence deny the existence of a God, the human soul, and other intelligences since intelligent nature is not an object of sense. Yet it may be argued that since we are conscious beings we cannot dispute the reality of our existence. Be it so, yet we have no consciousness of the existence of a God nor does he come within the notice of our senses but his existence we infer from that of our own and from external things with which we have a sensible acquaintance. Furthermore we deduce the inference of the real substance of the soul and that of its immortality from a chain of logical reasoning and not from either a sensible or conceious demonstration for our senses or immediate consciousness are inadequate to such discoveries though after we have investigated those truths by reason we are conscious that our conclusions are Just provided we reasoned with propriety but with respect to our intuitive consciousness there is no proviso about it inasmuch as it is always right. Thus it is that [ ] but after all that hath been argued on the plenitude of being, it may be urged that there is no such thing, or that there is not a universal plenum, for that it would preclude motion in general, not only that of the heavenly Bodies, but in man, and all other things. Should any two or more of the Planets of the Solar system, be so altered in their motion, as to strike each other the contact would be dreadfull, yet I believe there is no danger of it, since their motions were regulated by perfect wisdom, as well as moved by omnipotent power. But the question is, whether they could move in a plenum or not. If that kind of substance we call ether which is Imagined to extend through the heavenly space, were as dense as those Planetory worlds, it would have prevented their motion, though elastic, or subtile substances could not prevent their motion: nor would intelligent substances do it. A solid plenum, as has been before observed, would have precluded motion, and all other existence but itself, but a plenum consisting of an incomprehensibly diverse specific entity, may and does consist with motion, for it is not merely entity which excludes motion, but it is a hard or dense kind of substance only that does it. There may be millions of real incogitative substances in the universe, of which our senses have no apprehension, and yet are perceived by other Intelligences therein, who are, or may be endowed with senses, as diverse from ours, as those specific kinds of substances are different in nature, from those substances with which by our senses we are acquainted, all which may be as essential in constituting a plenum of universal being, as such kind of substances which come within the notice of our senses. Nor is it at all probable that those Intelligences interspersed through the Universe whose modes of sensations are very diferent from ours would as specific orders of being be able with their respective diverse senses to perceive [ ] not have prevented the wickedness of mankind, for that in their nature he has foreclosed himself, from any subsequent interposition of his preventing power, by makeing them (free) agents. Had it been among the number of possibles, that God could have prevented the wickedness of his creatures, by any omnipotant subsequent exertion of his power, consistent with that agency, with which he had by nature invested them, what reason can be assigned why God has not done it, and thereby have prevented the evil of sin. That God could not have prevented moral evil, is evident from the following considerations, to wit, that of all possible systems of being and providence, Infinite wisdom must have devised the best, and in the vast scale of being, comprised in that perfect system, there must be somewhere such a rank, order, or condition of creatures as man, in order to make the universal and systematical schale of being and providence compleat, and make an Infinite display of the natural attributes, and moral perfections of the Divine nature, and as a deficiency of the creatures called man, would have rendered the system of being and providence incompleat, and consequently have negatived the perfection of God, therefore the creation and existance of man was essentially necessary, and consequently must be, as they are by nature, since no other specific kind of creatures, could have been Identically man, or filled that place and rank of being, for which the creation and existence of man was necessary, and inasmuch as man, in order to be man, must be a (free) agent, he must have it in his power to do both moral good and evil, in the agency whereof God could not have controaled him, having originally mad him free, without violating the essential powers and faculties of his nature, or annihilating him, either of which would infringe on his wisdom, and rend his system of being and providence incompleat, and abortive. That moral evil cannot be attended with the consequences of eternal damnation, has been fully evinced in the third chapter of the theology.

On the position that there is any moral evil in the conduct of mankind, it will follow of necessary consequence, that we are agents, and in a state of tryal and proficiency, since God cannot be the efficient cause of the wickedness of his creatures, for if so he would be the blaimable cause thereof, which would of consequence exempt us therefrom, as there cannot be two efficient, and blaimable causes of the same Sin, therefore if it be in God, (which is blasphemous to suppose,) it cannot be in man, which would render an atonement for us, unnecessary and preposterous; as on this thesis the efficient cause, must have been responsible for man, and the premised sufferings and atonement, of the son of God for Sin, could only apply to the efficient sinful agency of God; in the passive actions of man, which is inadmissible, since on this position, God would be the offender as well as the redeemer.

We cannot in a moral sense become good or evil, in consequence of the mere act, or efficient agency of God, since it would be the act of another, and not our own, in which we could have no consciousness of praise or blame, or of intelligent happiness or misery: nor would a premised series, or concatanation of causes from God, which controal, or necessitate the behaviour of all mankind in life, alter the foregoing argument, inasmuch as a concatenation, or order of pre-existing causes, which necessitate events, either in the natural, or moral World, render those events enevitable, and therefore if in those train of events, human conduct is included, it is also enevitable, and if so, agency would be excluded from the nature of man, and center wholly in God the efficient cause, of the order of pre-existing causes; for on this thesis, there could be but one real agent or active being, who caused the whole train of events, produced by the order of pre-existing causes, and cansequently every action or event, in the concatenation of causes; would have retrospectively proceeded from God, who only has been an agent in every action or event, that has taken place among mankind, as well as in the natural World, and consequently the human race, and all other beings made use of, in bringing about those or actions, have been no more than innocently pasive, having been necessitated to motion, not action, (properly speaking,) by the superintending power of the universe, which would involve the God of nature in moral evil, or exclude it from the World, either of which is inadmissible. Therefore man is truly an agent, and more or less sinful, which Justifies the Divine Being, in his creation and providence, and lays the blame of moral evil to the vicious agency of man, where we are conscious it ought to lay.

The professors of Fatelism are divided and subdivided, in their notions of it, some are of opinion that every action of man in life, is altogether passive in the manner as is before described, and against which we have been arguing: and there are others who hold that we act both necessary and free, in the same action and at the same time, through the course of human life. The former notion of fate, is the most consistent with it self, however repugnant to matter of fact. And as we have already demonstrated the certainty of the agency of man, and consequentially his accountableness, we proceed nextly to inquire into the doctrine of his necessary and free agency, which is a palpable contradiction. Necessity and freedom, in the agency of beings in a state of proficiency and tryal, are incompatible with each other. They are diametrically Opposite, and therefore cannot be united in the same personal agency. The Ideas of necessity and freedom, in the same actions or behaviour of man, are perfectly heterogeneous, and in nature incapable of an association together. Necessity relates wholly to incogitative beings, and freedom to moral ones, and the manner of the exertions of necessity and freedom, are as diverse from one another, as the nature of incogitative, and cogitative beings are different from each another. There is no more of an agreement, uniformity, or connection between necessary action, and free action, than there is between north and south, life and death. A man may as well be said to be naturally alive, and at the same time naturally dead, as to act necessarily and freely, in the same action and at the same time, or to exist and not exist at the same time. Human agency excludes necessity, and necessity excludes human agency. A necessary probationary agent is a contradiction, and both parts of a contradiction cannot be true, if they could, it would blend truth and falsehood together, and confound their distinctions, and consequently overthrow all science and knowledge, we must therefore be considered as necessary beings, or as free beings for this obvious reason, that if we are the one, we cannot at the same time, be the other, since there is an Original, and intrinsic difference between them, upon which distinction, together with the understanding of right and wrong, all other notions of moral good and evil are founded.

This doctrine of the necessary and free agency of man, is by its adherents, thought at least to be in it self possible, from the consideration of the necessary and free agency of God, in the kingdom of his providence, which they Imagine to be necessary, because that of all possible systems, infinite wisdom must have adopted the best, and free, because that God from choice adopted it. Hence they infer, that the system of providence became both necessary and free, and from hence deduce the Inference, at least, of the possibility of the necessary and free agency of man.

These are far fetched comparisons, which cannot with any propriety apply to human agency, the analogy is infinitely dissimular. It is because that God is absolutely perfect, in his natural attributes of wisdom and power, and in his moral perfections of Justice goodness and truth, that he cannot (without ceasing to be God) in the agency of his providence, deviate from the rules of eternal unerring order, and infinite reason, and it is because that man is imperfect, and capable of sinful agency, that he can do it, and considered as a weak probationary creature, accountable and dependent wholly on God, who is eternal, self existent, and unlimitedly perferfert, will render the analogy of the Divine, with the human agency, altogether inaplicable and unlike each other, and therefore foreign to, and impertinent in the solution of the question; relative to human agency. We know from experience, that we are not under any necessity of acting conformible to our reason; or to our knowledge of the moral rectitude of things. Therefore it is not with our agency, as it is with the agency, or display of the providence of God, the one is imperfect and sinful, and the other is morally fit, and absolutely uniform. Had we been under a necessity of a conformity to moral rectitude, such a conformity must have taken place, and exempted us from sin, and consequently the moral necessity of a perfect decorum, which is in God (the analogy,) cannot be in man, as the argument from the analogy would have it, for if the same kind of necessity, (arising from perfect fitness) was in man, which there is in God (the analogy,) man could not have failed of acting up to the eternal rule of right, as God has done. Therefore the arguments deduced from the necessary, and free agency of God, in his providence, to evince the necessary and free agency of man, are quite foreign to the investigation of human agency, and only serves to delude the mind, by sophistically reasoning, from an Infinitely impertinent analogy.

In our argumentations, and investigation of the reason and nature of things; we ought to be very careful and exact, in the use we make of analogy, for that they either serve to illustrate, or perplex and obscure the subject matter of inquiry; according as they are either pertinent or impertinent thereto. A just comparison of things, has a tendency to elucidate and explain our Ideas of the matter in dispute; but if we make an unjust application of the analogy, of one thing to another, or of one argument or inference from another, which in their respective natures do not, and cannot compare together, we confuse our reasonings with the impropriety of comparison, and loose sight of the point we are indeavouring to investigate. We should therefore be very circumspect, and critically nice in our analogical comparisons; for if we draw an inference or conclusion, of one argument or thing from another, we must be sure that the analogy is Just, or that it agrees with the final issue of the matter or question in dispute, for if it does not we loose sight of, or are diverted from the point at Issue, by deducing our conclusion from things, arguments, and other prior inferences which are dissimular, and unlke the thing, or subject, we are indeavouring to investigate, and which are imperninent to the question under consideration; as in the instance of inferring, the necessary and free agency of man, from the necessary and free agency of God in his providence; in which case there is no Just comparison, and consequently no conclusion to be deduced from the Divine agency, which will agree to that of the human, as before argued.

To conclude that one thing is true, because another thing is so, makes such a conclusion wholly dependent on the analogy, that the one thing has to the other for its truth. If the analogical comparison of things, or arguments agree, the comparison is Just, but if they disagree it is unjust. The agreement of the analogy with the subject, point, or thing to be investigated, is therefore of the utmost importance, in all analogical reasonings, since the conclusion to be drawn thereform, is altogether predicated on the agreement, or disagreement between the analogy, and the point in question to be decided. Therefore as little use as possible, should be made of analogy in our reasonings: since in many cases it is as abstruce, as the thing to be investigated, and stands as much in need of other analogy, to illusterate the formmer, as to illusterate the subject matter of inquiry, in which cases they are useless, or worse than indifferent.

We should likewise be very accurate, in our analogical comparisons of things, which agree but in part, and disagree in part, the more so, as the degrees of agreement and disagreement, are almost of quite innumerable, and in many cases inconceivable to us, as the degrees of the simularity of things, either cogitative or incogitative, are to us in their extent incomprehensible. But in such of the comparitive Ideas of things, that come within our understanding, when rightly improved and cultivated, we should be inquisitively careful and nice, in making use of the comparitive Ideas of, or inferences from things, to things, in our argumentations on any subject, doctrine or final conclusion. It is for want of attention to such maxims as these, that we are so much confused in our problematical and religious disquisition of things. Truth is perfectly uniform, and in our progress of its investigation, we must proceed in our ratiocinations with a uniformity of reasoning; and Just comparison of Ideas, so as that our chain of reasonings is Just, which is the same as truth it self, for any error in the progress of investigation, as far as it influences the conclusion, or respective conclusions, in the chain or system of arguments, so far the reasoning is inconclusive or false, the same as an error in mathematical calculations, would spoil their conclusion, or respective conclusions.

The natural World, commonly so called, is ruled by irresistable necessity, and every analogy or comparison we bring from thence, to elucidate our agency, disagrees with it, inasmuch as sensless beings are not, and can not be capable of volition, design, or agency, and consequently as far as such analogies, have a place in our reasonings, on the (nature or) agency of the soul, they confound it, with the mechanism of incogitative beings, and therefore all such analogy is inadmissible in this Investivation.

The knowledge that we have of our internal power of agency, may be properly denominated Intuitive; since it is immediately perceived by the mind, without reasoning or inferring one thing from another, In this perception of things we all agree, and therefore cannot be mistaken, or deceived therein, as in the deductions of reasoning, in the scientiphical parts of learning, and consequently we may lay it down for a certain rule, that all our argumentations and conclusions, that militate against the intuitive (or conscious) knowledge, that we have of our spontaneous agency, are so many blunders, mistakes or deceptions of our own makeing, for the intuition of natural conscience, is Gods revelation to us, who cannot, and will not deceive us.

The strong and universal sense, which we intuitively have of our agency, must have established the reality of it, in the minds of mankind beyond all doubt, had not the learned Jargon of the schools, with some sectarians of Eccleciastic's, reasoning from false analogy, in some measure obscured it, and caused more or less dissension.

The uncultivated part of mankind, however obscure and exemp from science, do not distrust their conscious knowledge, this is a privilidge we derive from learned sophestry, in which the ignorant, and barbarous nations do not have a share. They never dreamed, that any necessity attended their actions, but with one consent, suppose them to be spontaneous.

The introduction of arts and sciences, have been attended with their advantages, and disadvantages, the same learning or art, that teaches logical reasoning, teaches sophestry, and the learned have hitherto been able to obtain more welth, and power from the great mass of the vulger, by deluding them, than by informing their understandings. Hence arises the numerous sectaries and party disputes, which to a person of good understanding, are almost equally nonsensical. Probably we are the most selfish, oddest, and cunningest medley of beings, of our size, in the universe. However to compleat the general schale of being, it seems to have been requisite, that the link of being called man, must have been, and since under the Divine government, we have a positive existence, we can not ultimately fail, of being better than not to have been.

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